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THE

# CHRISTIAN'S OWN BOOK.

## *MEDITATIONS*

DRAWN FROM

## THE PIETY OF FORMER AGES.

WITH AN

**INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,**

BY

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# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

To lead an inquiring sinner in the way to Christ, or a renewed soul to more intimate communion with him, all lawful means become important, as under the divine blessing they have proved effectual. But probably no one in the whole list of means of spiritual good, is more generally found useful, than the records of the *experience* of those who have heretofore travelled in the road to life eternal. There is an identity in the principles of spiritual religion in all ages, and in all cases, which renders the personal experience of the servants of the living God, in its general points, every where the same. So that the history of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and the results of the operations of his Spirit upon their minds, as displayed in their private diaries and meditations, become a continually increasing treasure for the Church, and a witness living through succeeding generations, of the spiritual power of God. This source of instruction and guidance in the way of refreshment and peace, is beautifully referred to in the Song of Solomon. When the Church asks, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?" the

direction given in reply, is "If thou know not, go thy way forth, by the footsteps of the flock." The path in which others have trodden in every age, is the path in which we are also to walk, and "the footsteps of the flock," as they are marked before us, will guide us to that rest in which it terminates, and which he whom our souls love, has provided for those who belong to him.

The natural condition of all men from Adam, as it regards their relation to God, and their dispositions towards him, is the same—"all have sinned," nay "are dead in sins." The power by which they are renewed to holiness, and enabled to embrace the righteousness of God by faith, is also the same—"the mighty power of the Holy Ghost." The image and character, after which they are new created, is in all instances the same divine and spotless image of God. And the subject, the principles, and the pattern of grace, being thus always alike, the process in which this new creation is effected, is in each case the same also. The work of divine power and love which is accomplished, in bringing one unholy heart to submit to God, is but the sample of unnumbered thousands of similar divine operations. Each converted sinner is set forth as a pattern of divine long-suffering, to them who should hereafter believe. And "the footsteps of the flock," are found for every successive age, an invaluable guide in the way of holiness.

This instrument of spiritual good, the Holy Scriptures have very extensively displayed and used. A

large portion of the sacred influence which they are made to exercise upon the hearts of the children of God, arises from their infallible details of the personal experience of his children, in the ages in which they were written. Their abstract principles of truth become living and acting ministers of grace, as they are seen embodied in the varied trials and aspects of character, of men of like passions with ourselves, who have overcome in all their conflicts, and have entered into their rest. The history of David, in connexion with the records of his spiritual attainments, in the Psalms.—The story of suffering and sorrow which is told of the deeply sensitive Jeremiah, united with the accounts of the workings of his own mind under the influence of grace.—And in a later age, though with the same principle, the painful detail of hazard and distress which is given of the Apostle Paul, illustrated by the history which he presents of the progress of grace in his soul, in his various epistles: these, and many other similar instances in the sacred writings, are found to be of peculiar benefit to the Christian, because they are registers of facts, and show not only what God can do in the restoration of sinful men, but what he actually has done, to make his goodness and his power known. These saints of former days, who stand up in their place in the divine word, as witnesses for God, are not peculiarities in his plan of grace—no exceptions from his general rule. They find the counterpart of their history, in those who have tasted the good word of God, and known the grace of

God in truth, in every succeeding generation of the Church. Accordingly, all that they have written of themselves, and of the power of grace upon their hearts, remains as a most profitable source of instruction to all who have since obtained like precious faith with them;—and the Bible continues to be an instrument of unceasing good; not only because it speaks with divine authority, by the inspiration of God, but because it relates the wonderful works of God, in the conversion and sanctification of so many redeemed souls.

This principle, which renders the inspired record of the character and the meditations of men known to be the servants of God, so useful to us, even in these last days, affixes also an important value to similar histories of the experience of later servants of God, transmitted to us from age to age. It is true, that later histories can never be guides in the same degree profitable, as the stories of the word of truth, because there will necessarily be a less degree of confidence, in the relations of uninspired men. But then, we have this *more sure* word of prophecy, by which to try the spirits whether they are of God; and in proportion as we become convinced, that the individuals before us have walked in the way of life, will their footsteps be found a helpful guide.

In religious biography, particularly that kind of biography which lays open in a private and free diary the intimate workings of the heart, and the state of the affections towards God: and in the meditations

and private exercises of other Christians, when they are separated from such matters as are exclusively personal in their application, the Christian finds, perhaps, the most useful department of religious reading. They become particularly interesting and important, when the persons before us, have been known and read of all men in their day and circle of intercourse, as living epistles of Jesus Christ. If we go back through latter ages, to the early and present times of the Christian Church, and to the lives of the holy and exemplary Christian professors, who lived and acted in those times, there is so much confidence resting upon the character and professions of men who were disciples in the midst of great difficulties, that all the records of such, which have been handed down to us, are of acknowledged worth. It is comforting and encouraging to us, to find the identity of our religious feelings and plans; to see that their inward trials were like ours; their sense of sin equally deep and painful; their conflicts with spiritual enemies as severe; and their discouragements to perseverance in duty as numerous. It is animating to our feeble efforts and desires, to behold them coming daily anew to Christ for pardon and peace; to witness the simplicity of faith, with which they rest upon his sufficiency for their daily strength; to know that they gloried even to the end of life, only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified to them; and to see that out of weakness they were thus made strong, and became conquerors at last, through him that loved them. It

is also calculated to establish our faith in the great doctrines of the Scriptures—the Trinity of the Godhead, the mediation of Jesus, and the power and operations of the Holy Ghost—to find them asserted and inculcated, in the writings of men so near the time of inspiration, in the same forms as they are now received by the evangelical Churches of our time. These doctrines were with them matters of experience, and not of speculation. And it is a remarkable evidence of their truth, that they are always received as the unavoidable result of that operation of God, which brings the sinner to a knowledge of himself. No man, it is presumed, who knows the power of religion, as a vital principle of conduct in a renewed soul, will be led to any other permanent result in doctrine, than that which the following pages contain. And it is only as they are thus known, in the result of personal experience of their *practical results*, that they have an abiding and operative influence upon man, and a permanent value in his sight.

If my reader has followed me through these observations, he has arrived at the single object of the present publication. I would in this way assist the followers of the Lord around me, in leading them forth, with the divine blessing, "by the footsteps of the flock." The meditations which are here collected, have been drawn, as the title-page announces, from the piety of former ages. In making the compilation, I have used no other liberty with the matter selected, than the correction of language, for the more

satisfactory communication of thought, and the furnishing of titles to the various extracts which I have made. The translations from the original language were made by the Rev. George Stanhope, D. D. in the early part of the last century. The style and manner of expression had become in many places quite obsolete, and required alteration to be made intelligible. Thus far only have I allowed myself latitude, that I might retain, as entire as possible, the character of the original meditations. The present title the publisher has furnished. It becomes an appropriate one, from the believed accordance of the contents of the work with the Holy Scriptures, which should be, in a primary sense, the Christian's Own Book. The reader who feels an interest in the concerns of experimental piety, will here find details of private religious character, that will probably become an accurate mirror for himself. Should he make this little work his companion, it will, under God's blessing, guide and instruct him in the way of peace. The footsteps which it contains, were left by men who have long since gone to their reward. The latest date which can be assigned to any of them, record many centuries as passed by since their time. Yet the language which told the operations of grace upon their hearts, expresses the feelings of which every one is still conscious, who is brought from the power of Satan unto God. To the good of those into whose hands this little book may come, it is affectionately devoted, with a prayer for God's merciful blessing upon all who shall

make it their guide to Christ. In several years' use of these selections, the editor has found, he trusts, edification and profit, and it is as an humble instrument to lead others to nearer communion with the adorable Redeemer, that he presents them in this form to the Churches of the Lord. S. H. T.

PHILADELPHIA, October 1, 1832.

THE

# CHRISTIAN'S OWN BOOK.

## MEDITATION I.

### *Accountability to God.*

The Lord, even the most mighty God, shall come. I know thou shalt appear, and not always keep silence. Then shall thy glory be seen, then shall thy voice be heard, then thy terrors felt by all the world; when a fire shall devour before thee, and a horrible tempest be stirred up round about thee. When thou shalt call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that thou mayest judge thy people. And must our sins, which we now so industriously conceal, must every aggravating circumstance be then laid open, before so many thousand millions of witnesses? Must I be then upbraided before so many troops of angels and saints, with not my evil deeds only, but even with the sins of word and thought? Must I stand then helpless and friendless before so many judges? Must I be confounded with the reproaches of so many eminent patterns of piety and virtue, whose examples I refused to follow? Must I stand the shock of so many witnesses, who will testify against me how often their charitable advice hath been given me to no purpose, and how ineffectual all the good they did was to provoke my imitation? Blessed God! what shall I have to say, or how shall I find an evasion?

The very apprehension racks me at this distance; my conscience flies in my face; and I have this dismal prospect continually in view. I see, and daily lament my danger, and every vicious disposition helps to dress up the woful scheme. My secret imaginations sting me, my covetousness fetters me, pride accuses, envy gnaws and consumes me, lust inflames, intemperance shames me, detraction tortures, ambition supplants, violence and fraud upbraid, anger disorders, gentleness makes me secure, sloth overcomes, hypocrisy cheats me, flattery makes me effeminate, applause and favour vain, slander full of anguish.

These, my great, my only deliverer, these are the fierce nations that make war against me: these the acquaintance I have been bred up with; this the company I have too much delighted to frequent, and with whom I have contracted too great familiarity. Thus the objects of my love condemn me, and to my shame and dishonour. These are the friends I have trusted, the teachers I have learned of, the masters, or rather the tyrants, to whom I have lived in subjection; the counsellors by whom I have been governed, the companions with whom I have lived and acted.

Wo is me, my God, that I have thus long dwelt in Mesech, and had my habitation among the tents of Kedar. For sure, whatever reason David had, I have much greater to lament, that my soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace. But thou, O Lord, art still my hope and stay. In thy sight, it is true, shall no flesh living be justified. I put not, therefore, any trust in the sons of men: for if thou, Lord, shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who among them

is there, that might abide it? And therefore, unless thou meet the sinner with thy mercy and pardon, for what hath been done amiss, there cannot be any righteous to be glorified, any qualified for the enjoyment of thy presence in glory.

Therefore, my God and my salvation, I come to thee, knowing that thy goodness leadeth to repentance. How sweet are those words of thine to my throat! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth, that NO man cometh to thee except the Father draw him, and that him who cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out. Since, then, thou hast not only instructed me in, but even given me new life, by the knowledge of this truth, and thus again made me thy own creature; I do with all imaginable earnestness, with all the sincerity and zeal my heart is capable of, beseech thee, Almighty Father, together with thy most dearly beloved Son, and thee, O best beloved Son, with thy most holy Comforter, draw me, that I may run after thee, and be delighted with the odour of thy precious ointments.

## MEDITATION II.

*The Misery of Unregenerate Man.*

O Lord, the Word of God, the Word itself God, thou art light, and by thee the light was made; thou art the way, the truth, and the life, in whom is no darkness or error, no vanity or death. Without thee, I put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Without thee I am filled with confusion and mistake, ignorance and blindness. Say to my soul, let there be light, that I may discern the light, and avoid darkness; that I may see the way, and be delivered from my wanderings; that I may know the truth, and not be deceived by falsehood; that I may attain the true life, and not be swallowed up in death. Thou art my Lord, and I will fear thee; my God, and I will praise thee; my Father, and I will love thee. Pity this desolate creature, who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guide my feet into the way of peace, that I may go into the house of my God with the voice of joy and thanksgiving. For this is the way by which I must return from my errors, unto thee the true way, even the way of life.

I will therefore approach thee, O Father of heaven and earth, and lay before thee all my state, that in the frank confession of my misery I may obtain thy mercy. I was reduced to nothing, nay, to worse than nothing, and knew it not, because thou art the truth, and I was not with thee: I was wounded with my transgressions, and felt no

smart, because thou art the life, and I was not with thee. I was brought to nothing, because thou art the Word, by whom all things were made, and I was not with thee.

Now what it is to be without the Word, is easy to be understood from that description given of himself, I am the way, the truth and the life. He that is without these, is without the Word; and to be without him is evil, because it separates from the Author of all good. And I thank thee, O Lord, for so far enlightening me with the knowledge of thee, and of myself, as to make me sensible, that whensoever I forget that which is good, and corrupt myself with evil, I am transformed from what I was, lose my spiritual life and being, and am cut off from thee. Wretch that I was, not to consider this before! How low I fell, and how exactly that description of the heathen idols suited the condition of my soul; for this too, during my separation from thee, hath ears and hears not, nose and smells not, eyes and sees not, mouth and speaks not, hands and acts not. In short, is nothing but an empty form, the lines and proportions of every part, without the use and sensation proper to any of them.

So true it is, that while I was without thee, I was not at all; but fell back into nothing; blind and deaf, and insensible to do good, having no inclination, no knowledge to avoid evil. Hence, had my enemies their will upon me; they stripped and wounded, they spoiled and slew me, because I departed from thee, my light and my defence. But, O God of my life, raise me, I pray thee, from this death. Look upon me in the day of my trouble, and save me from the hand of insulting adver-

saries. Let them that hate me flee before thee, and let me live in thee, and by thee. They saw my misery, and had me in derision. They defiled thy holy temple with filth and sin, and brought me into ruin and desolation. They led me captive from one wickedness into another, and dragged me through mire and clay. I was a slave, and in love with my bondage; blind, and loved darkness rather than light; tied and bound, and fond of my chains; miserable, and knew it not. And all, because separated from that almighty Word, by which every creature subsists, and is preserved. O do thou from henceforth unite me to thyself; for, when I go from thee, I perish; and can no other way be restored to being, but by that Power making a new creature, which at the first did make me out nothing. And, blessed be that power and mercy, which visited me when I offended, raised me up when I was fallen, taught me when I was ignorant, and gave sight to my eyes when I was blind.

## MEDITATION III.

### *A Prayer for Reformation of Life.*

INSPIRE my soul, O Lord my God, with a holy desire of thee, my chief, my only good, that I may so earnestly desire, as diligently to seek thee, so successfully seek, as to be happy in finding thee; make me so sensible of that happiness in finding, as most fervently to love thee; so effectually to express that love, as to turn from all my past wickedness, by hating and forsaking my former evil courses, and entering upon a conversation exemplarily pious for the time to come.

Give me, O my God, hearty repentance, an humble and contrite spirit; make my eyes a fountain of tears, and my hands liberal dispensers of alms, and unwearied instruments of good works. Thou art my King; reign absolute in my heart, subdue and expel thence all rebellious passions; quench all the impure burnings of fleshly lusts, and kindle in it the bright fire of thy love.

Thou art my Redeemer, beat down and drive out the spirit of pride, and impart to me, in much mercy, the treasure of thy own unexampled humility and wonderful condescension.

Thou art my Saviour, take from me the rage of anger; and arm me, I beseech thee, with the shield of patience.

Thou art my Creator, root out from me all that rancor and malice whereby my nature is corrupted; and implant in me all that sweetness and

gentleness of temper, which may render me a man made in thy own image, and after the likeness of thy own Divine goodness.

Thou art my most merciful and indulgent Father, O grant thy own child those best of gifts; a firm and right faith, a stedfast and well-grounded hope, and a never-failing charity.

O my director and governor, turn away from me, I beseech thee, vanity and filthiness of mind, a wandering heart, a scurrilous tongue, and a proud look; preserve me from the venom of slander and detraction, from the itch of curiosity, from the thirst of covetousness, ambition and vain-glory; from the deceits of hypocrisy, the secret poison of flattery; from contempt of the poor, and oppression of the helpless; from the canker of envy, the fever of avarice, and the pestilential disease of blasphemy and profaneness.

Prune away my superfluity of naughtiness, and purge me from all manner of injustice, rashness, and obstinacy; from impatience, blindness of heart, and cruelty of disposition.

Incline me to obey that which is good, and to comply with wholesome advice; enable me to bridle my tongue, and to restrain my hands from wrong and robbery. Suffer me not to insult the poor, to defame the innocent, to despise my inferiors, to treat my servants with severity and scorn, to fail in due affection towards my friends and relations, or in kindness and compassion towards my neighbours and acquaintance.

O my God, thou fountain of mercy, I beg thee, for the sake of the Son of thy love, dispose me to the love and practice of kindness and mercy; that I may have a tender fellow-feeling of my brethren's

afflictions; and apply myself cheerfully, to rectify their mistakes, to relieve their miseries, to supply their wants, to comfort their sorrows. Dispose me to assist the oppressed, to right the injured, to sustain the needy, to cherish the dejected, to release them that are indebted to me, to pardon them that have offended me, to love them that hate me, to render good for evil, to despise none, but pay all due respect to every man. Give me grace to imitate those that live well, to avoid and beware of them that do ill; to follow all manner of virtue, and utterly abandon and detest all sort of vice: make me patient in adversity, and moderate in prosperity. Set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips: wean my affections from things below, and let them be eager and fixed upon heaven and heavenly things.

## MEDITATION IV.

*Self-accusation.*

Thou, Lord, who hast formed me, knowest the work of thy own hands, and yet, because thy creature, I have been bold to ask many and great mercies, though less than, and altogether unworthy of, the least of all thy mercies. I acknowledge, O my God, with shame and sorrow, that not only the gifts and graces I have been imploring all this while, are in no degree my due; but that many and grievous sufferings and judgments are what I have justly deserved at thy hands. But when my soul feels itself sinking under the weight of this melancholy reflection, the publicans, and harlots, and sinners, those wandering and lost sheep, which the good Shepherd sought so carefully, drew back from the very brink of the hellish precipice so seasonably, brought home upon his shoulders so joyfully, and laid in his bosom so affectionately; these raise my drooping spirits, and give new life to my hopes. For thou, my God, hast made all things by thy power, and art wonderful in all thy doings; yet art thou most wonderful, and exceeding glorious in thy works of pity and love. In this sense too, is that most true, which thou speakest of thyself by the mouth of thy servants. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. And what was said of one particular person, we may most truly apply to thy people in general, my mercy will I not take from him. For thou abhorrest, despisest, forsakest

no man; but such only, as lost to all sense of their own duty and happiness, do first despise and forsake thee.

Hence it is that thou dost not only, not strike when thou art not angry, but even when thou art most justly so. Thou givest good things liberally, upon the request of those wretches who have provoked thee to anger. O my God, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge, I am sadly sensible that I am one of those miserable wretches; I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil in thy sight; and yet thou holdest thy hand. I have sinned, thou hast suffered: I have offended, and still thou bearest with me. If I repent, thou sparest; if I return, thou receivest me with open arms; nay, even while I delay, thou waitest patiently for my coming back to thee. Thou callest me to thee, when I go astray; thou invitest me while I am deaf to thy gracious calls; thou stayest till I shake off my wicked sloth; and, when thy prodigal child at last bethinks himself, thou meetest and embracest him most gladly. Thou instructest my ignorance, comfortest my sorrows, keepest me from falling, raisest me up when I am fallen, givest when I ask, art found when I seek thee, and openest the door when I knock.

Thus, O God of my salvation, I have nothing to offer in my own excuse; no plea to make, when thou chargest me with folly. There is no refuge for me, but in thy goodness and protection; no place to hide me in from thy all-seeing eye. Thou hast showed me the right way; thou hast taught me how I ought to walk in it; thou hast threatened the torments of hell to affright me from wicked-

ness; and promised the joys of heaven to encourage my obedience.

And now, O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, perfect, I beseech thee, these gracious designs upon thy servant; possess me thoroughly with thy fear, that I may not dare to incur thy threatenings; and support me with the joy of thy salvation, that I may be filled with thy love, and cheerfully run the race that leadeth to thy gracious promises. Thou, O Lord, art my strength, my God, my refuge and only deliverer: O be thou pleased to inspire my soul with proper thoughts of thee; teach my tongue fit words to call upon thee acceptably; and enable my hands, and every member, to do the thing that pleaseth thee. I know full well that there is one offering which thy mercy will not reject. The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit, a broken and a contrite heart my God will not despise.

Yet even this I cannot give my God, unless he first vouchsafe to give it me. And therefore, O thou Father of lights, from whom every good thing cometh, enrich me, I beseech thee, with this. I ask no other treasure; may I thus find pardon of my sins in the blood of my holy Saviour.

Suffer me not, O thou strength of my soul's health, suffer me not, I beg, to be one of those weak Christians, who for a time believe, and in time of temptation fall away. But cover thou my head in the day of battle; for thou, thou only, art my hope in the day of trouble, and my safety in the time of danger.

Thus do I come to thee, my light, and my salvation, imploring the blessings of which I stand in need, and declaring the miseries of which I am

afraid. But in the midst of this address, I feel a check from within; my conscience stings, and my heart misgives me; love bids me hope, but sense of sin bids me fear; and dread of thy displeasure damps that zeal with which my heart approaches thee: when I reflect on my own doings, I cannot but despond; when I look up to thy goodness I am full of hope. The kindness of my God invites and draws me forward, the wickedness of my own heart dismays and pulls me back. And all my faults appear in such ghastly shapes before my eyes, as almost hinder a holy confidence, but quite beat down the boldness of presumption.

## MEDITATION V.

*Lamentation that Prayer is not answered.*

Thus is my soul distracted with different passions, when I appear before the Divine Majesty. And how, alas! should it be otherwise? For with what face can that man entreat a favour, who hath deserved nothing but hatred and indignation? What rashness is it to ask glory, when punishment only is his due? The malefactor provokes his judge, and, instead of satisfying for his offence, he expects to be honoured with crowns and rewards: he lies under sentence of condemnation, and is it not insolent to sue for a bounty, to which he hath no manner of pretence? A stupid child provokes a most affectionate father, and is it not yet a greater provocation to assume to himself the claim of inheriting, till he have first retracted his undutiful behaviour? This, O my Father, I confess with grief to be my own case; I ask life, and have deserved death; I have been disloyal to my King, and yet have the confidence to fly to him for protection: I have despised my Judge, and armed his angry justice against my guilty self, and yet to this very Judge I betake myself for succour. I have stopped my ears against the commands of a father, and yet I take upon me to depend upon him for his paternal affection and care.

To thee, I come; but, oh! how long do I make it before I come? how much precious time do I trifle away in this most important, most necessary

affair? My feet, alas! are swift to ruin, but slow in the way that leads to life and safety. I run after sickness, and wounds, and death, and take no care to shun the darts which made those wounds, even when I have felt the smart, and am healed of the sore. I prevented not those dangers which might have been avoided, and am at last awakened into a sense of them, when they have brought me to the very gates of the grave. I have added to my plagues by multiplying my transgressions, and torn open my old wounds, by relapsing into my former evil courses; and those maladies which the spiritual physician had cured, the frantic patient hath again brought upon himself: the sore, which was skinned over, now breaks out afresh, because inflamed by that repeated folly, which hath forfeited the mercy extended before. I know who hath declared, that when the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. And if this righteous man, when he falls into sin, lose all the benefits of his former righteousness, what good can be expected for the ineffectual remorse of that sinner, who commits evil, and repents of it, and then does the same evil again? This is to me a mortifying thought, to me, who have so often returned with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

How oft I have offended, it is not in my power to remember: but this I own with a heavy heart, that, in general, I have taught men by my example how to sin, and may have made many wise and skilful in wickedness, who lived before in happy ignorance of it.

But, how deficient soever my own memory may be, yet I have to deal with a just and terrible Judge: one who seals up my iniquities in a bag, and spies out all my ways. And though thou hast holden thy peace, and hast been still, and refrainest thyself a long time, yet I dread to think the day will come, when thou shalt cry like a travailing woman, and destroy and devour the ungodly at once.

## MEDITATION VI.

*An Address to the Father through the Son.*

I CALL upon thee, O my God, yea, even upon thee do I call, who declarest thyself nigh unto all such as call upon thee in truth. But thou thyself art Truth, and therefore teach me, for thy mercies' sake, to perform this service as I ought; for without thee I know not how to please thee; and therefore do make it my most humble and earnest request to be taught by truth itself. All wisdom without thee is no better than folly, and to know thee alone, is the sum and perfection of knowledge. Inform me, therefore, O Divine wisdom, and make me to understand thy statutes. For I am fully persuaded, that he, and he alone is blessed, whom thou nurturest and teachest in thy law.

My desire is to call upon thee, and to do it in truth: but what can calling upon truth itself in truth mean, except applying to the Father by the Son? Holy Father, thy Word is truth. In that Word of truth I call upon thee, O essential and original Truth, and beg to be directed in, and thoroughly taught the truth.

And what can be more delightful than to address Him that begot, in the name of his only begotten? than to move the Father to tenderness by the mention of his own dear Son? A king's anger cools instantly, if the offenders are such favourites of the prince, as to make use of his name and interest: and servants find it no hard matter to come

off without blows, if the children are employed in their behalf. Since then these methods are so successful below, why should they not have the same good effect above? I will beg the Almighty Father, for the sake of his Almighty Son, to bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto his name. Loose me, Lord, from the bands of my sins, for the sake of thy only, thy co-eternal Son; and by the intercession of that dear, that Divine image and brightness of thy glory, now sitting at thy right hand, be reconciled to a poor sinful wretch; and, instead of that death, with which my wickedness deservedly threatens me, raise and restore me to a life of hope and blessedness.

This is indeed the only advocate I can employ: for whither should I flee, or whose interest should I depend upon with the Father, except to go to Him, who is the propitiation for our sins; who also sitteth at the right hand of God, making intercession for us? This therefore is my mediator with thee, heavenly Father; this my perfect high-priest, who needs not be sanctified with other blood, but hath made atonement, and stands before thee, pure and bright, in virtue of his own blood, with which he was washed for our sakes. This is that holy and unblemished, that acceptable and perfect sacrifice, offered for a sweet smelling savour unto God. This that Lamb without spot, who was dumb before his shearers; and though reviled, and buffetted, and spit upon, yet he opened not his mouth. This that righteous person, who did no sin, but condescended to bear our sins, and by his own stripes to heal our putrified sores. Look upon him, I beseech thee, and heal my soul.

## MEDITATION VII.

*The Son's Sufferings represented to the Father.*

Look, therefore, gracious Father, look upon this best and highest of Beings, who hath endured such indignities upon my account. Consider, most merciful King of heaven, who it is that suffered; and at the same time think for whom he suffered such bitter things. Is not this, my God, that spotless innocent, whom, though thy Son, thou wert pleased not to spare, that he might redeem thy servant? Is not this that author and giver of life, who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and becoming obedient even unto death, was content to die in the most painful and ignominious manner? O thou, whose wonderful wisdom contrived the whole mystery of man's redemption! reflect, I beseech thee, that this is that very person who though begotten of, and resembling thee, in thy almighty power, yet was ordained by thee to partake of my weakness. It was thy own Divine, which clothed itself with my human nature, and in my flesh ascended the cross, and felt the torments of a most shameful death. O let this unspeakable instance of condescension and love be ever before thine eyes! See that beloved Son extended on the cross; behold his holy hand stained with innocent blood, and pardon those iniquities with which my wicked hands have been polluted. Behold his naked side pierced with a cruel spear, and wash me in that fountain, which by the eyes of faith I see flowing from that wound. Behold those blessed feet, which never

stood in the way of sinners, but walked in the paths of thy commandments, thrust through with merciless nails, and hold up my goings in thy paths, and give me grace to hate all evil ways, and to choose the way to truth and righteousness. I beseech thee, O King of saints, may it please thee, by this powerful Redeemer, so to dispose my heart and actions, that I may be united to him in the same spirit, who did not disdain to be united to me in the same flesh.

See his pale breast, his purple sides, his eyes languishing in death, his arms grown stiff, his pierced feet drenched with streams of precious blood; look, glorious Father, look upon this body, bruised and broken, and torn, and then in mercy call to mind whereof I am made. Let the punishment of God and man, personally united, atone for a man created after his and thy likeness. Let the sufferings of the Redeemer be ever in thy sight, and in them overlook the offences of thy unworthy creature.

## MEDITATION VIII.

*Sinful Man the Cause of Christ's Sufferings.*

What hadst thou done, O Saviour undefiled, to bring thee as a criminal before thy enemies' bar? Or how hadst thou deserved to be treated with such rude and insolent, such unrelenting and triumphant barbarity? What passage of thy whole life could they fix an accusation upon, what crime allege, to countenance so rigorous a sentence? If none, (as none they could) whence then thy shameful bitter death, or how camest thou to be condemned as a vile malefactor? It was I, alas! it was wretched I, that gave thee all those pains: it was I deserved the death that thou enduredst; and my offences gave those scourges, those nails, that spear, the power of slaying and wounding, and killing thee. O wonderful process! mystery of justice! that the wicked should offend, and the righteous be punished for it! that the guilt and the condemnation should thus be separated! that the servant should contract a debt, and the Lord, to whom it was due, make satisfaction! that man should provoke the Divine vengeance, and God should feel the smart of it! How low, O Son of God, did thy humility stoop! How fervent was thy love! How boundless thy compassion!

For I have done wickedly, and thou art called to account for it: I armed an angry justice against myself, and it is discharged upon thy head: mine is the crime, and thine the torture: I have been proud, and thou art humbled; I am puffed up, and

thou hast emptied thyself: I have been rebellious, and thy obedience hath expiated for it. I have been intemperate, and thou hast hungered and thirsted for it: my ungoverned appetite sinned in the forbidden, and thy immense love submitted to hang on the accursed, tree: I wallow in pleasures, and thou art torn with nails: the honey in my mouth is turned to gall in thy stomach: the tempting Eve rejoices with me, the sorrowful Mary suffers and laments with thee. Thus is my wickedness and want of love to God, thus is thy righteousness and inexpressible love to man, manifested in this marvellous dispensation.

And now, my God and king, what reward shall I give, what return can I make for all the benefits thou hast done unto me? Surely it is not in the power of man to find out any requital answerable to such bounty: for how should the narrowness of a finite mind, extend to any thing fit to be compared with infinite compassion? How should a poor creature be capable of any recompense suitable to the mercy of an almighty Creator? And yet, my dearest Saviour, so wonderfully is this matter ordered, that even man, even I, weak and worthless though I be, may find something which thou art pleased to accept in return. O by thy grace may my soul be broken and humbled, and I crucify this flesh with its affections and lusts. May I be wrought up to this holy disposition, that I may begin to suffer for, and live to thee; and in some sort to pay back what thou hast endured when dying for me. This is the utmost my condition will admit; and this, though but little in itself, yet when proceeding from the same principle of holy love, thou art graciously pleased to accept, as the

utmost poor mortals can do, in acknowledgment of their great Maker.

I beseech thee, therefore, by thy tender mercies, which have ever been of old, pour such balm into my wounds, as may dispel the venom of my diseases, and restore me to spiritual health and soundness. Let me drink of thy heavenly sweetness, and be so ravished with the taste, as ever after to disrelish the sensual delights of the world, to despise its pleasures, and cheerfully encounter the afflictions of this present life; and so to fix my heart on true noble joys, as always to disdain the empty and transitory shadows, of which flesh and blood is so foolishly fond, and so fearful of parting with.

Let me not, I beseech thee, esteem or delight in any thing but thee: let all this whole world can give, without thee, be counted no better than dross and dung: let me hate most irreconcileably whatever displeases thee; and what thou lovest, let me most eagerly desire, and incessantly pursue: let me feel no satisfaction in any joys without thee; nor any reluctancy in the greatest sufferings for thee. Let the mention of thy name, be always a refreshment, and the remembrance of thy goodness, an inexhaustible spring of comfort to my soul. Let tears be my meat day and night, so I may attain to thy righteousness; and the law of thy mouth always dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver. Let me aim at nothing so much as to do thee service; nor detest and avoid any thing in comparison of sinning against thee. And, for what I have unhappily done of that kind already, I entreat thee, my only refuge and hope, to pardon for thy own mercies' sake. Let my ears be ever open to the voice of thy law, and suffer not my heart to

incline to any evil thing, that I never comply with them that practise wickedness, nor take shelter in trifling pretences to excuse or indulge myself in doing what I ought not. And once more, I beg thee, by thy own unparalleled humility and sufferings, that the foot of pride may not come against me, nor the hand of the ungodly cast me down.

## MEDITATION IX.

*Application of Christ's Death and Sufferings by Faith.*

Thou seest, my Lord, my God, I have done my utmost to incline thy mercy; I have with a most sincere zeal offered to thee the best, the dearest, the most acceptable thing I have: nay, I have nothing else, no addition to make, since in this one I place my whole trust, and make a present at once of all I value or depend upon. For I have addressed thee by my only advocate, and thy only Son: that one mediator between God and man, that glorious intercessor, by whom I assuredly expect acceptance and forgiveness. I have sent that Word in my behalf to thee, which thou didst heretofore send down from heaven for my sins; I have presented to thee that passion, which thy own Son hath undergone, for the release of the debt to thy justice which my sins have contracted. I believe that thy only Son sent thus into the world, did take upon him my manhood; that in this state he vouchsafed to be bound and buffeted, to be derided and spit upon, to be nailed, and pierced, and crucified. And this nature of mine, after being wrapt up in swaddling clothes, and moistened with infant tears; after the toils of youth, the mortifications of fastings, and watchings, and long journeys; after being furrowed with scourgings, torn upon the cross, numbered among the dead, and at last honoured with a glorious resurrection: this nature of

mine, I most assuredly believe, thy Godhead united to it, hath now exalted to the joys of heaven, and seated at the right hand of thy Majesty on high. This is my confidence; this the reconciliation for my sins; this the atonement thou hast accepted for them.

Remember then, in much mercy, the worth of thy Son, and the condition of thy servant redeemed by him. Look upon the Maker, and despise not the work of his hands. Take the shepherd into thy embraces, and cast not out the stray sheep, which he brings home upon his shoulders. For this is that careful shepherd, who, when his sheep wandered over steep hills, and thorny vales and desolate wildernesses, sought and brought it back with wonderful skill and pains: and when it was faint and just expiring, sustained and carried it, tied it fast to himself by the straitest bands of love, lifted it out of the pit of error and confusion, and with many a kind and tender embrace rejoiced over it, and fetched the poor lost silly creature home, to the ninety and nine which lay safe in his own fold.

See then, my God and King, see the good shepherd bringing to thee the sheep committed to his charge: he undertook to save man by thy appointment, and he hath performed the undertaking so as to restore to thee in himself, pure and spotless, thy once polluted creatures. He brings back in safety that prey, which the wolf and robber had carried off by violence. He brings that servant into thy presence, whom his own guilty conscience had put upon fleeing from thy sight; that the punishment due to his sins might be remitted through his Lord's satisfaction. And the offender, who had nothing to look for, but to be banished for ever into

hell, may, under the protection of this glorious conqueror, be assured of admittance into his heavenly country. I needed none to help me in offending thee, but without help I never could have been reconciled to thee. Thou, therefore, who alone couldest be, thou my God wast my helper; and thy beloved Son has effected, that which could not have been effected, had he not taken my nature upon him, in order to cure my infirmities.—Thus hath his grace made me an object of thy mercy; while sitting at thy hand in my substance, he gives me hope that thou will not hate that in me, which thou canst not but love in him. This is my hope, and the joy of my confidence.

If then I do, as well I may, seem vile and despicable in thy sight, through my own impurities, yet look upon me at least with an eye of pity, when thou beholdest my likeness in the Son of thy love. Hide my sins in his wounds, and let my stains be washed in his most precious blood. Flesh provoked thee to wrath, let flesh likewise prevail with thee for mercy: and as my flesh drew me into sin, so let my Saviour's draw thee to compassion. Great I confess are my faults, and the punishments due to them; but greater, infinitely greater, are the merits and sufferings of my dear Redeemer. Between my sins and his righteousness there is no comparison, no proportion at all, either for quality or degree, no more than there is between God and man, between an atom and an infinite.

For what is it possible for man to be guilty of, which the Son of God made man must not needs have compensated? What pride can be so extravagant, that his humility did not exceed and make amends for? What dominion could death have so

absolute, that the death of the cross should not utterly overthrow it? If then Almighty God would be pleased to weigh the sins of man in a balance against the goodness of his Saviour, east and west, heaven and hell, are not so far distant from each other. And therefore, O my God, let my manifold offences be pardoned, for the many more pains and sufferings of thy dear Son: let his piety atone for my want of it, his ready obedience for my perverseness, his meekness for my untractable temper: set his humility against my pride, his patience against my discontent, his kindness against my hard-heartedness, the calmness of his soul, against my fretfulness and unruly passions, his gentleness against my rage, his universal and unwearied love against my hatred, revenge, and cruelty.

## MEDITATION X.

*Dependence upon the Holy Ghost.*

And now, O Holy Spirit, love of God, who proceedest from the Almighty Father and his most blessed Son, powerful advocate, and heavenly comforter, pour out upon me thy grace, and descend plentifully into my heart; enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling, and scatter there thy cheerful beams; dwell in my soul which longs to be thy temple; water this barren soil, overrun with weeds and briars, and lost for want of cultivating, and make it fruitful with thy dew from heaven. Heal the lurking distempers of my inward man; strike me through with the dart of thy love, and kindle thy holy fire in my breast, that it may flame out in a bright and devout zeal, actuate and enliven the heavy mass, burn up all the dross of sensual affections, and, diffusing itself through every part, possess, and purify, and warm my whole spirit, and soul and body.

Make me to drink of thy spiritual pleasures as out of a river; and let their heavenly sweetness so correct my palate, as to leave no desire, no relish for the gross unhealthful fulsomeness of worldly delights. Judge me, O Lord, and defend my cause against the ungodly people. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God. I believe, that in whomsoever thou dwellest, the Father and the Son do likewise come, and inhabit that breast. And, oh! happy is that heart, which

is honoured with so glorious, so divine a guest, in whose company the Father and the Son always come, and take up their abode! O that it may please thee to come to me, thou Comforter of mourning souls, thou mighty defence in distresses, and ready help in time of need. Come, thou strength of the feeble, and raiser of them that fall. Come, thou putter down of the proud, and teacher of the meek and humble. Come, thou hope of the poor, and refreshment of them that languish and faint. Come, thou star and guide of them that sail in this tempestuous sea of life; thou only guardian of the tossed and shipwrecked. Come, Holy Spirit, in much mercy, enable me to receive thee, condescend to my infirmities, that thy strength may be made perfect in my weakness. Bring me to the feet of my Saviour Jesus Christ, my only hope, who, in the unity of thee, O Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth with the Father, one God, world without end. Amen.

## MEDITATION XI.

*The Word made flesh.*

May my heart believe unto righteousness, and my mouth confess unto salvation, that unspeakable goodness bestowed upon mankind in these latter ages of the world. Thou, O Father, art the only person, of whom we no where read that he was sent. But of thy Son, the apostle hath instructed us, that when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son. By saying God sent him, he means that the person thus sent, came into the world, when he condescended to be born of the virgin Mary, and made his appearance in our flesh a true and perfect man.

But what means that passage of the great evangelist, He was in the world, and the world was made by him? Surely that he was sent hither with regard to his humanity, but was really here before, in respect of his divinity. Now this mission I believe, and thankfully acknowledge to have been the work of the whole Trinity. But, O holy Father, how great was thy love, and how tender the Almighty Creator's concern for his poor creatures, which spared not his own Son, but delivered him up freely for us, and which is the most astonishing circumstance, for us while we were yet sinners! That Son became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, he took the hand-writing that was against us, and nailed it to that cross of his; thus crucifying sin and slaying death. He only was

free when in the regions of death and captivity, because he only had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again, for us.

He therefore was the victor and the victim, and therefore the victor, because the victim. He was the priest and the sacrifice, and for that reason the true High Priest, because the true sacrifice to thee our God. Firm, therefore, are those hopes I entertain, of having all my diseases healed by him, because he sitteth at thy right hand, living for ever to make intercession for us. Those diseases, I must own, are many and sore, for the prince of this world hath much in me; but I apply to thee for health, by the merits of that Redeemer, in whom his malice could find nothing. Justify me by him, who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. By that holy and spotless head of all thy saints, convey health and salvation to thy weak polluted member. Deliver me, I beseech thee, from my sinful habits, my vicious dispositions, my faults of wilfulness, of negligence and ignorance. Fill me with thy grace, and help me to excel and resemble thee, the perfection of goodness. Keep me stedfast in the way of thy commandments, and enable me to grow and persevere in virtue unto the end, that I may live and die according to thy will.

What other foundation could a sinful creature, laden with guilt, and quite overwhelmed with frailties, have for, hope? What could poor I, whose conscience upbraids me with infinite faults and neglects, have looked for, but judgment and fiery indignation, had not thy Word, O God, been made flesh, and dwelt among us? But this marvellous dispensation will no more suffer me to despair, than my own condition, without it, could have justified

my hope: for who shall dare to despair when we, even while we were enemies, were reconciled by the death of thy Son; and, therefore, without all question, being reconciled, shall much more be saved by his life? This is my hope, the rock of my confidence, even the precious blood of thy dear Son, which he shed for us, and for our salvation. In him I revive, and take courage to approach thee, not having my own righteousness, or presuming in any degree upon any work of mine, but that righteousness which is of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, even the righteousness of God, received by faith in his sacrifice for me.

For this, I give thee my most unfeigned thanks, O tender lover of souls, who by thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hast created us again to a new life when we had made ourselves nothing, and worse than nothing; and hast wonderfully delivered and restored us to a spiritual being, when we were sunk and absolutely lost in sin and misery.

All praise be to thy fatherly compassion, which from the bottom of my heart I admire and thankfully adore, for that inexpressible love wherewith thy bowels yearned over ruined man, whereby thou didst extend to most unworthy wretches such marvellous grace; didst send thy only begotten out of thy own bosom, for our universal benefit, and save poor sinners, when the children of wrath and perdition.

All honour and praise be to thee, for his miraculous incarnation and holy nativity, whereby he took flesh of the substance of his blessed mother, for us, and for our salvation, that as he had been before from all eternity very God of God, so he might be in time very man of man.

Glory and praise be to my God for his passion and painful crucifixion, for his death and resurrection, for his triumphant ascent into heaven, and his sitting in our nature, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. For on the fortieth day after his rising from the dead, he went up in the sight of his disciples, far above all heavens, and from this throne did, according to his most true promise, shower down the Holy Spirit most plentifully upon the sons of adoption.

All honour and thanksgiving be unto thee, O Father for ever, for that shedding of his most precious blood, whereby we are redeemed, washed, and sanctified from our sins, and admitted to be partakers of the Divine nature.

Blessed, for ever blessed be that astonishing and unspeakable goodness, which so tenderly loved, wretches so unworthy of thy love, and saved a perishing world by thy only, thy best loved Son. For no instance of thy mercy can compare with this; no expression of it can be carried higher, than that thou shouldst so love the world as to give thy only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And this is life everlasting, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent; to know thee by a right faith, and to manifest that knowledge by works suitable to such a faith.

## MEDITATION XII.

*The Father's Love.*

O LOVE inestimable! that delivered up a Son, to ransom a servant; an only, an entirely beloved Son, for a wicked and rebellious servant. God was made man, that perishing man might be rescued from the tyranny and power of devils. How infinitely kind was that Son, how tender of souls, whose pity was content to stoop so low for our salvation, so low, as not only to take our nature of his virgin mother, but in it to shed the blood he took, and endure the scandal and torture of the cross! Behold the merciful and gracious God, coming in grace and mercy, infinite from his own Divine essence, and such as no being but God, who is love and goodness itself, could be capable of; coming to seek and to save that which was lost. Behold the careful shepherd looking for his stray sheep, searching till he find it, and when he hath found it, carrying it back to the fold upon his shoulders with most affectionate joy.

Who can forbear admiring, adoring, exulting with transports of joy, at the infinite goodness of thee, my God, and the love wherewith thou lovedst us? Thou sentest thy own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin didst condemn sin, that we might be made thy righteousness in him. For "this is the very paschal lamb without blemish and without spot, who by his death hath destroyed death, and

by his rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life."

But what, alas! are we able to repay thee for such wonderful benefits, such astonishing demonstrations of thy concern for us? What praises, what thanksgivings are sufficient? Though thou shouldest impart to us all the knowledge and wisdom, all the activity and power, of angels which wait continually about thy throne, and execute all thy pleasure, yet could we not be qualified for any action worthy so vast a favour: though every limb were a tongue, yet could we not even thus sound forth thy praises as they deserve: for even angels themselves, are too weak to comprehend the depth and glories of this mystery, infinite as thyself, and therefore such as could only be effected, such as can perfectly be known, by thy own knowledge only, infinite as thy own goodness. How have we deserved, that thy Son, and our God should take upon him, not the nature of angels, but should take the seed of Abraham; that he should become like us mortals in all things, sin only excepted; that he should honour this mortality with the glories of his resurrection, with a crown of immortality; that he should exalt it far above all heavens, above all the innumerable company of angels, above cherubim and seraphim, and place it at thy own right hand; that angels should praise, that dominions should adore, that all the powers of heaven should fall down, and humble themselves before, and cast their crowns at the feet of, this man and God in one person, seated in dignity so far above them all!

This exaltation is my joyful hope: this my firm and only confidence; for even that Jesus, in that glorious Lord, is a part of every one of us. We are

of his flesh, his blood, and his bones. Now where a part of me already reigns, there I believe myself shall reign also; and in the triumphs and glories of his flesh, I plainly see and am assured of the honours which may be done to my own. Though I am a miserable sinner, yet the participation of this grace will not suffer me to despond: and, if my own vileness exclude me from this bliss, yet my substance, already admitted to it, opens a passage for me thither too. For God cannot forget that manhood, with which himself is clothed, which he put on for my sake, and which he will one day receive to himself for my unspeakable benefit.

No, our God is merciful and gracious, tenderhearted, and of great goodness. He loves his own flesh, his own body and his own members. We are his body, and his substance. He is our head, from whence the members are derived, to which they are inseparably united; and of us also is that ordinance of God in the first creation verified, that He is the bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and we two are no more two, but one flesh. Now the apostle tells us, and if he had not, even nature itself tells us, that no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it. And of this principle of nature, he hath justified the application to our own eternal comfort, and most assured hope, when he adds those most precious words: This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

For this cause, O Lord my God, my tongue, my heart, my every faculty, shall never cease to magnify thy infinite loving-kindness for all the miracles of mercy which thou hast been pleased to work for the relief of wretched man, by the ministry and

mediation of thy blessed Son, the great restorer of thy lost world. That Son, who died for our offences and rose again for our justification; and now liveth for ever at thy right hand, making intercession continually for us: that Son, who joins with thee in extending the mercy for which he intercedes, because he is of thee, and with thee, the same very and eternal God, which makes him able for ever to save them, that come to thee by him: that Son, who even as man, though in that respect inferior to thy Divine majesty, hath all power given to him in heaven and in earth; that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to, and in thy glory, O God the Father. This is he whom thou hast ordained to be the judge both of the quick and the dead; for, thou thyself judgest no man, but hast committed all judgment to thy Son, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now he is both the witness and the judge; that judge, and that witness, whose discerning eye no guilty conscience can escape: for all things are naked and open in his sight. Thus he, who did himself submit to a most unrighteous judgment, shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity. I magnify thy holy name, O Almighty and most merciful God, and from the bottom of my heart give glory to thee, for this wonderful conjunction of the Divine and human nature in one person, that so one might not be God, and another be man; but that one and the same should be both God and man. But notwithstanding thy Divine Word, did, by a most astonishing condescen-

sion, suffer himself to be made flesh, yet both these natures still remained distinct and perfect, and neither was changed into, or swallowed up in the other. There was no addition of a fourth person to the Holy Trinity by this amazing dispensation; but all was so done, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, might be bestowed upon all thy people.

O marvellous mystery! O mercy most adorable, ever to be admired, ever to be loved! We were not worthy to be called thy servants, and thou hast made us sons; sons of God, not only sons, but heirs too, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Whence is this mighty favour? Who are we, that the King of heaven should thus delight to honour us? Nothing, alas! and even less than nothing. But since, O gracious Father, thou hast been pleased to do great things for us; I beseech thee, by thy own unspeakable love, to perfect the good work thou hast begun; and make us such, as thy many and gracious promises in Jesus Christ were designed to be accomplished in. Send down thy grace and spirit from above, and let this qualify us to receive the fulness of thy mercy. Help us to understand and consider with reverence, to contemplate, and with all diligence to walk worthy of this mystery of godliness, this Son of God, manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

## MEDITATION XIII.

*Thanks to God for Redemption.*

How vainly are we indebted to thy bounty, O Lord, whom thou hast redeemed with so precious a ransom, saved with so noble a gift, honoured with so high a privilege! What fear, what reverence, what love, what thanks, what praise and glory, ought wretched sinners to render to a God, who hath thus pitied, thus loved, thus rescued, thus sanctified, thus exalted them! The whole of our ability, the whole of our knowledge, our very life and being is all of it thy just tribute. But, alas; what ability hath any of us? What can we do, or what indeed are we, which is not thine already? Thou, therefore, from whom all good things come, impart to us, for thy own name's sake, of thy good treasure, that of thy own gifts we may give back again to thee; and by thy grace be enabled to serve and please thee in faithfulness and truth, and to render thee due and daily praise for all thy works of mercy, yea, even for the very power of rendering thee this praise.

For, alas! we are very sensible that the very power of serving and pleasing thee is entirely thy gift; since every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And in this sense we address to thee, O Father almighty, acknowledging thy power; O Father of mercy, depending on thy goodness; O

Lord incomprehensible, adoring thy infinite excellence; O maker and restorer of all things by thy Son, Jesus Christ, in confidence of thy love through that all-sufficient Saviour, whom thou hast vouchsafed to send out of thy own bosom for our common benefit, to take our life, that he might give us his. In the name, therefore, of this wonderful person we approach thee; and well we may, since he who cannot lie hath left this joyful assurance with all that love him, That whatsoever such shall ask the Father in his name, he will not fail to give it them.

Therefore by this great, this true, this only perfect high priest, this bishop of souls, who offered himself a spotless and propitiatory sacrifice to thy justice; by this good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep; by this Mediator and Redeemer, who sitteth at thy right hand, making intercession for us, I implore thy mercy, O most tender lover of mankind, that thou, this Son of thine, and thy blessed Spirit, would grant me grace, truly and constantly to magnify thy glorious name, with deep remorse and godly sorrow for my sins, with humility and repentance unto salvation, with profound reverence, with fear and trembling. And for this, I entreat the whole Trinity of persons, who being all united in this glorious work of redemption, must of necessity be joined in the same act of giving.

But being sadly sensible withal, that the spirit within me, how willing soever of itself, is yet weakened and weighed down by this corruptible body, I beg that thou wouldst stir up and quicken my stupidity, and so actuate this heavy lump, that I may vigorously attend to, and stedfastly persevere in, the ways of thy commandments, and the proper

methods of giving thee true praise day and night. O let my spirit wax hot within me, and in my musings let the holy fire burst out. And in regard thy own Son hath declared, that no man cometh unto him except he be drawn of the Father; and again, that no man cometh to the Father but by him; draw me, I most humbly pray thee, continually to him, that he at last may bring me to thee, even to those happy mansions, where he now sits at thy right hand, where there is life and bliss everlasting, where joyful love abounds, and fear is done away, where there is eternal day, and perfect agreement of souls, certain security, and secure quiet, pleasure and exquisite happiness, happy eternity, and eternal blessedness, even the ravishing sight, and the never-ceasing praise of thee the great and glorious God: where thou, with that blessed Son, as does that blessed Son with thee, livest and reignest in the unity of the same Divine Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## MEDITATION XIV.

*Address to the Saviour.*

My hope, my God, and Saviour, thou light and way, thou life and health, thou glory and grace of all that love and serve thee! Look down from the throne of thy majesty, and in the midst of bliss remember the injuries and sufferings, the scourges, and the cross, the wounds and death which thou enduredst—and think with favour on thy suppliant, for whose sake thou wast pleased to endure and do so much.

Thou art the living and true God, my gentle and kind master, my great king, my good shepherd, my only teacher, my most ready and effectual helper, my true and living bread, my everlasting high priest, my guide to my own country, my reconciliation and peace, my sure defence, my most desirable portion, my unblemished sacrifice, my perfect redemption, my assured hope, my resurrection from the dead, my everlasting life. Of thee I beg, that I may walk by thee, come to thee, rest in thee, O thou way, thou truth, thou life, without which no man cometh to the Father. Thou, even thou, art the blessing my soul wants, and most earnestly desires, my only Lord.

O brightness of thy Father's glory, who from thy throne far above the cherubim seest all the secrets of the great deep! Thou true, enlivening, unexhausted light, with which angels long to be illuminated, and spend glad ages in beholding! spring forth in my soul, and scatter the thick darkness

there, that the brightness of thy love may shine and shed itself through every corner of my benighted heart. Give me thyself, O God, give me thy love in return, for that I love thee thou knowest; and while I confess it is too little, I desire to love thee more ardently. I cannot make such exact reckoning of my love, as to know how much I fall short of that affection which I ought to have, that so my every action and desire might carry me to thy embraces, fly to thy arms, and never cease the pursuit of my Lord, till I be hid in the secret place of thy presence. But though I cannot take a precise measure of my defects, and how much better I ought to be, yet this I know, and from my own experience can declare, that all without, nay, all besides thee, avails me nothing; all about, all within is desolation and misery; whatever the foolish world calls plenty, is nothing; and all but my God is poverty, and the very extremity of want.

For thou alone art that good, which cannot admit of either diminution or increase; to thee to live and to be happy is the same thing, who art happiness itself. But thy creature, with whom these things may be separated, and who may either not live or live and be unhappy, ought to ascribe the whole benefit of both life and happiness to thy sole gift and favour. Hence it is that we stand in continual need of thee, but thou hast none of us: for, if we had no being at all, that would not lessen in any degree that happiness, which is inseparable from thy being! nay, is indeed thy very being. It is therefore absolutely necessary for us to cleave steadfastly to the Lord our God, that by thy continual assistance we may be enabled to live soberly,

righteously, and godly, in this present world. For this load of flesh and frailty cumbers and drags us down, but the gifts of thy Spirit are a happy counterpoise to this heavy clog. By these we feel the slugglish mass warmed and put into motion; we rise and mount upwards in heart and mind; we sing songs of degrees, and, inflamed with thy Divine fire, burn with holy zeal and soar aloft successfully.

But whither is it that these flights would carry us? Even to the Peace of Jerusalem: According to that of the Psalmist, I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord. There, hath his goodness prepared a place for us, that the sum of all our wishes and desires should be to set up our rest there for ever. For, because we are absent from the Lord, during the time of our sojourning in this tabernacle of the body, we have no continuing city here, but are seeking one to come; we lodge in a moveable tent, and are travellers and strangers in a foreign land; but we are free denizens of heaven, and our home and all our privileges and properties are there. I will therefore move under the conduct of thy grace. I will retire into the closet of my heart, and entertain my soul with songs of love to thee, my King and my God; with tender sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered; in the house of my pilgrimage, which the contemplation of thy righteousness shall soften, while it is made the subject of my joy and praise.

And can I think upon Jerusalem without stretching forward all the desires of my soul to that region of bliss? Jerusalem, the country, the common mother of us all; and thee, my God, that reignest

there in glory; the light of that holy city, the father and defender, the governor and the shepherd; the pure, but exquisite delights that abound there; the substantial joy, and all the unspeakable felicities united in thee, who art the true, the supreme, the only felicity of thy people. O let me not, I beseech thee, turn back, or go out of the way, but proceed continually in my affections, till thou at last bring my whole spirit, and soul, and body, into the peaceful mansions, where my heart is already fixed. The first fruits of the Spirit I already taste. Impart to me the whole lump, and fill my soul with the joys which I now anticipate. Collect my scattered thoughts, and take off the blemishes and deformities of my present frailties, till thou hast wrought me up to a resemblance of thy beauty, and established me for ever in the glories of thy blessed presence, O God of my salvation.

## MEDITATION XV.

*The Converted Soul the House of God.*

This house of thine, my God, is not built of earthly, nor of any such heavenly, but corporeal matter, as the orbs above are formed of; but is spiritual and immortal, without flaw or decay. For thou hast set it fast for ever and ever, and founded it upon a decree which shall not be broken. Thou hast given it a duration equal to thy own, and end it shall have none, though it had a beginning. For wisdom was created in the beginning: not that essential Wisdom, co-eternal with the Father, by whom all things were made; but that which is a created but spiritual substance, the rational and intellectual mind, which is light by contemplation of light, and in a qualified sense styled wisdom, though it be finite and created. But as there is a mighty difference between original Light, and that which is derived from, and caused by the reflection of it; so is there between thee, the perfect uncreated Wisdom, and that which is thy creature, and thy image. Thus also we distinguish between the righteousness which justifies, the righteousness of Jesus Christ thy Son, in which the Apostle says, we are made the righteousness of God, and that personal holiness which the Holy Spirit gives to every converted soul.

But having received both, freely by thy grace, the renewed soul is so closely united to thee, the true, the eternal God, that though it be not of the same eternity from the beginning, yet no length of

future time, no change of fortune or affairs, shall ever dissolve or loosen it; but it shall rest and be employed for ever in the ravishing contemplation of thy Divine excellences. For thou, O God, art bountiful to all that love thee; and wilt reveal thyself to such as seek thee, in measures large as their capacities admit, or at least as their necessities require. This keeps thy servants steady to thee and to themselves. This preserves the soul in the same happy state, while its eyes are ever intent, its affections ever fixed upon thee; while it beholds and loves and delights in that God, who is true light and pure love. O blessed noble creature, a holy immortal soul, the first and best of all the works of God! but then most blessed, when dwelling upon thy Master's blessed perfections; then happy beyond all expression, when entertaining that Divine inhabitant, and illuminated with the beams of that glorious day-spring from on high! always transported with the pleasure of beholding the Divine glory: always fixed upon God, without admitting any rival or partner in its love.

This indwelling of God, in this spiritual house, forms the happiness which blessed spirits enjoy. This is their heavenly satisfaction in heavenly places. This the foretaste of future joys, and the assurance of every way-faring soul, that though it sojourn at present in a strange land, and at a great distance from thee, yet if it thirst and pant after God, if the dwelling above hereafter all the days of its life be its constant wish and endeavour, its longing shall one day be satisfied with the pleasures of his house, and all its pious mournings turned into joy. From this bliss then and the duration of their own joys let our souls raise themselves, to form such ideas of

thine as their present condition can receive: for what notions must we have of this blessedness, and how vast is thy eternity, when even this created house of thine, when keeping at home with thee, by its union with its glorious Maker and inhabitant, stands proof against all chance of time; and, persevering by thy gracious influences, is firm, notwithstanding the possibility of change to which it is subject. Secured by thy presence, and those liberal communications of thy grace, which it drinks in, and feasts upon continually, it looks at nothing beyond thee, as a future addition to its happiness; it is afflicted with no troublesome remembrances of any thing past, which should embitter or lessen the present, but is entirely blessed with the enjoyment of that God, who hath in mercy made it like himself, and knit it to himself with the strongest bond of inviolable love, and such a fulness of satisfaction, as neither suffers nor desires a change.

## MEDITATION XVI.

*The pious Soul longing for Heaven.*

Lord! how have I loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth! O glorious seat! the residence and the workmanship of the great, the mighty God. Let me continue, let me increase in this love of thee more and more. Let this weary pilgrimage be spent in advancing daily towards thee, and may the gasping of my soul after thee sanctify and comfort the labours of each day, and refresh my waking thoughts by night. Let my heart be always where my treasure is already. And, in this dry and desolate wilderness, may I feel no other wish than that of arriving at my heavenly Canaan, and partaking in the society and the joys of that happy people, who have the Lord for their God. O may that God who made both me and thee possess me in thee! Not that I dare presume to hope for thy beauty and bliss upon the account of any deserts of my own; but yet, the humblest sense of my own unworthiness will not sink me into despair of it, when I reflect upon the blood of him who died to purchase this mansion for me. Let but his merits be applied to me; let his intercessions make up my want of worth, and then I am safe; for those merits cannot be overbalanced by my sins, nor were, nor can those prayers be ever offered up to God in vain.

For my own part, I confess with shame and sorrow, that I have gone astray like a sheep that is

lost; drawn out my wanderings and my miseries to a great length; and am cast out of the sight of my God into the blindness and darkness of a spiritual banishment. In this forlorn estate I sadly bewail the wretchedness of my captivity, and sing mournful songs when I remember thee, O Jerusalem. As yet I am at an uncomfortable distance, and at best my feet stand only in the outer courts of Sion. The beauties of the sanctuary are behind the veil, and kept hid from my longing eyes: but I am full of hope, that the builder of this sanctuary, and the gracious shepherd of souls, will carry me home in his arms, that I may there rejoice with that joy unspeakable and full of glory, which all those happy saints feel, who are already admitted into the presence of their God and Saviour: the Saviour who hath opened this royal palace to all believers, by abolishing the enmity in his flesh, and reconciling all things in heaven and earth by his own blood.

He is our peace, who hath made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition, promising to give us the same degree of happiness in his own due time, which is already enjoyed by, and in thee. For thus he hath declared, that they who are worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, shall be equal unto the angels. O Jerusalem, the eternal habitation of the eternal God! mayest thou be the second object of my soul's desire, and only he be preferred before thee in my affection, who shed his blood to make me worthy of thee. Be thou the joy and comfort of my languishing mind, my great support in hardships and distresses; may the remembrance of thee be ever sweet, and the mention of thy name a holy charm to drive away all sorrow from my soul.

## MEDITATION XVII.

*The Miseries of the present Life.*

Well may I seek for some relief from these contemplations of a future state, since this in which I now am yields me no diversion, no satisfaction at all; but is a painful and wearisome journey; a wretched, decaying, and uncertain life; a life of labour, and, which is worse, a life of sin, and pride, and folly; full of miseries and errors, and rather death than life, since in it we die daily, by the constant decays and alterations of our bodies, and the sundry kinds of death, to which we stand every moment exposed.

And can we in any propriety of speech call this living? Does that empty thing deserve the name of life, which is blotted with tumours, macerated with pains, burnt up with fevers, blasted by an infected air, fattened with eating, brought down with fasting; enervated with mirth, consumed with melancholy, shortened with care, stupified with security; blown up with riches, dejected by poverty; made gay by youth, bowed down with age, broken with infirmities, and destroyed with griefs? Nay, as if all these evils were too little, the conclusion of them all is the tyranny of death, which puts a speedy period to what we falsely call the joys of life, and abolishes them and wears out all the footsteps and remembrances of them so utterly, that it is from thenceforth, as if they had never been at all.

And yet it is prodigious to consider how this

strange mixture, for which we know not well how to find a name, this living death, or dying life, though in every part embittered by these and infinite other miseries; how it imposes, I say, upon the generality of mankind, and cheats them with lying promises of imaginary happiness. Nay, though the cheat be so gross, that the blindest of its admirers cannot but discover it; and the potion so nauseous, that the most stupid cannot but loath and be sick of it; yet still unnumbered are the fools that drink large draughts of its cup and are intoxicated with the bewitching liquor. But happy are those few, those very few, who by grace from above, keep their distance, and will not trust themselves in its treacherous embraces; who despise its vain superficial joys, and will have nothing to do with its flattering allurements, for fear at last it prove their fate to have the deceiver and the deceived perish together.

## MEDITATION XVIII.

*The Happiness of the Life prepared for them that love God.*

But, oh! that life which God hath laid up in store for them that love him! that happy, secure, serene, and most desirable, that pure and holy life: that life which fears no death, which feels no sorrow, which knows no sin, which languishes under no pain, is distracted with no care, is ruffled with no passion, lies at the mercy of no accidents: that incorruptible, that unchangeable life, which hath every thing that can attract our affections, and command our esteem. There will be no enemies to assault us, no envy to undermine us, no temptation to seduce us, no fears to confound us, but perfect love and harmony of souls; a day that never declines, a light that never goes out: there we shall see God face to face, and when we awake up after his likeness, our souls shall be satisfied with it.

O let me indulge this delightful thought, and run over all the beauties and blisses with an unwearied desire! For the more I consider, the more passionately fond I grow of thee, and feel no pleasure comparable to the sweet reflections upon, and impatient thirstings after thee. Here will I dwell, for I have unspeakable delight therein. Upon this let me fix my eyes, my heart, my studies; to this let me direct all my desires, and conform all my dispositions. This subject let me hear of continually, let it be my theme to write on, my entertainment

in conversation. I will spend my private hours in reading of its bliss and glories; I will meditate frequently upon what I have read of it; that thus at least I may find some refreshment, some loose from the miseries, and toils, and incumbrances, of a troublesome perishing life; and at last recline my weary head, and lay me down to sleep with joy, when I know that sleep shall be shaken off again, and the blessedness of this life, truly so called, immediately commence upon my waking.

This makes me walk with such delight in the pleasant gardens of the holy Scripture; here I am diligent to gather the sweet flowers of God's word and promises: I devour them by reading; I meditate upon them by frequent recollection; I lay them up in my memory as a most valuable treasure; and, by tasting and feeding upon these delicious descriptions of another world, I take off great part of the bitter and nauseousness of the present.

O happy state! O truly glorious kingdom; without succession, without confusion! Where time is no longer measured by the revolutions of days and nights, summers and winters; but eternity is continued through one endless day, one ever-blooming spring. Where they, who have been victorious in their spiritual warfare, join in concert with the blessed angels, and sing the songs of Sion without ceasing. There a never-fading crown adorns every head, and exquisite joy overflows every heart. O that my sins were blotted out, my pardon sealed! O when will it please God to give me leave to lay down this load and lumber of flesh, and admit me without spot or corruption into the true rest, the transporting delights of that blissful place! that I may walk about the beauteous walls of the city of

God, view all her palaces, and receive a crown at the hand of my merciful Judge; when shall I make one in that holy choir, and behold the majestic presence of my Maker, with the spirits of just men made perfect? When shall I see my dear Redeemer face to face, and approach that unspeakably bright, and as yet inaccessible light, which flows from the Sun of Righteousness? When, O when, shall I be freed from the bondage of the fear of death, and possess the uninterrupted joy of an endless incorruptible state, conferred upon me by the bounty of my God?

Happy the soul, which refined from this dross of earth, and got loose from its incumbrance of a body, soars up to heaven, and takes its dwelling there, secure from any future assaults, and triumphant over death. Then does it feast upon the beauteous face of that dear Lord, whom it served, and loved, and longed to enjoy, in that glory and glad immortality to which it is at last arrived. A glory and gladness which no length of time will wear out, no envious adversary can take away. This redeemed soul is the spouse which the daughters saw and blessed her; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved? Who is she that goeth up as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? With what eager joy does she fly to the arms of her Lord, when with joyful astonishment she hears the voice of his most affectionate call, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away? For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is

heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, thou art in the cliffs of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. Come, my chosen, my fair one, my dove, my spouse, and I will receive thee into my throne, for I have longed for thy beauty. Come and rejoice before me with the angels, to whom I have promised to make thee a companion. Come, after long toils and many dangers, and enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, a joy which no man taketh from thee. Happy, indeed, the soul that hears this blessed summons from the Son of God.

## MEDITATION XIX.

*Succour in present Trouble.*

Blessed are all thy saints, my God and king, who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of mortality, and have at last made the desired port of peace and felicity; fearless of future hazards, and full of perpetual joy. This sea, thou, my Saviour, didst condescend to try and be tossed upon. O cast a gracious eye upon us who are still in our dangerous voyage. Thou art possessed of never-fading glory, but do not in the midst of thy own happiness, forget those who are beset with vast variety of miseries. Thou hast chosen us to thyself, and what we are or hope to be, is all thy gift: thou hast promised to make us immortal with and by thyself, and to bestow upon us the everlasting felicity of thy presence; O remember and succour us in our distress, and think on them who lie exposed to the rough storms of troubles and temptations.

Thou art the beautiful gate of heaven, the door at which the sheep must enter; but we, alas! lie grovelling here below, and our soul cleaveth to the dust. Stretch forth thy hand, and raise us up; strengthen our weakness, that we may do valiantly in this spiritual war, who of ourselves are not able to stand against the mighty force that comes against us. Help us against our enemies' power; help us against our own negligence and cowardice, and defend us from the treachery of our own unfaithful

hearts. We are exceeding frail, exceeding weak and despicable, slaves to intemperance and lust, and indisposed to every virtuous and gallant undertaking. And yet, helpless wretches as we are, when listed under thy banner, and borne up by thy cross, we are buoyed up by thy faith, and commit ourselves boldly to this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts, where is that Leviathan, that serpent ready to devour; wherein are rocks and quicksands, and other dangers without number, on which the careless and the unbelieving run their vessels, and suffer shipwreck daily.

Intercede for me, therefore, most gracious Saviour, that, by thy powerful mediation, and all-sufficient merits, I may be able to bring this vessel and its lading safe to shore; and be conducted to the haven where every pious soul would be, the haven of peace and salvation, of uninterrupted rest, and never-ending joy.

## MEDITATION XX.

*The Heavenly Jerusalem.*

O HEAVENLY Jerusalem! Our common mother, the holy city of God, thou beautiful spouse of Christ; my soul hath loved thee exceedingly, and all my faculties are ravished with thy charms. O what graces, what glory, what noble state appears in every part of thee! Most exquisite is thy form, and thou alone art beauty without blemish. Rejoice and dance for joy, O daughter of my King, for thy Lord himself, fairer than all the sons of men, hath pleasure in thy beauty.

But, what is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth, I sought him and found him. I hold him fast, and will not let him go, till he bring me into his house, into the secret places of his tabernacles. O glorious metropolis! there shalt thou give thy children everlasting consolation, and so fill me with the plentiful communication of thy pleasures, that I shall never hunger more, neither thirst any more.

O how happy will my soul perceive itself when it shall be admitted to see thy glory, thy beauty; to view the gates, the walls, the streets, the stately

buildings, the splendour of thy inhabitants, and the triumphant pomp of thy king enthroned in the midst of thee! For thy walls are of precious stones, and thy gates of pearl, and thy streets of pure gold, continually resounding with loud hallelujahs. Thy houses are founded upon hewn square stone, carried up with sapphire, covered in with gold, and no unclean person can enter into thee, no manner of pollution abide within thy borders.

Sweet and charming are thy delights, O holy mother of us all. Subject to none of those vicissitudes and interruptions which abate our pleasures here below. No successions of night and day, no intervals of darkness, no difference of seasons in their several courses. Nor is the light derived from artificial helps, or natural luminaries, the same with ours; no lamps or candles, no shining of the moon or stars, but God of God, and light of light, even the Sun of Righteousness shines in thee, and the white immaculate Lamb, he it is that enlightens thee with the full lustre of his majesty and beauty. Thy light and glory, and all thy happiness, is the incessant contemplation of this divine king; for this King of kings is in the midst of thee, and all his host are ministering round about him continually.

There are the melodious choirs of angels; there the sweet fellowship and company of the heavenly inhabitants; there the joyful pomp of all those triumphant souls who from their sore trials and travels through this valley of tears, at last return victorious to their native country. There the goodly followship of Prophets, whose eyes God opened to take a prospect of far distant mysteries. There the twelve leaders of the Christian armies, the blessed

Apostles; there the noble army of the Martyrs; there the convention of confessors; there the holy men and women, who in the days of their flesh were mortified to the pleasures of sin and the world; there the virgins and youths, whose blooming virtues put out early fruits, and ripened into piety far exceeding the proportion of their years. There the sheep and lambs, who have escaped the ravening wolf, and all the snares laid for their destruction. These all rejoice in their proper mansions; and, though each differ from other in degrees of glory, yet all agree in bliss and joy, diffused to all in common; and the happiness of every one is esteemed each man's own.

For there charity reigns in its utmost perfection, because God there is all in all, whom they continually behold, and beholding, continually admire, and praise and love, and love and praise without intermission, without end, without weariness, or distraction of thought. This is their constant, their delightful employment. And O how happy shall I be, how exquisitely, how incessantly happy, if, when this body crumbles into dust, I shall be entertained with that celestial harmony, and hear the hymns of praise to their eternal King, which hosts of angels, and saints innumerable, are ever singing in full concert! How happy myself to bear a part with them, and pay the same tribute to my God and Saviour, the author and the captain of my salvation! To behold his face in glory, and be made partaker of those gracious promises, of which he hath given me the comfortable hope, when saying to his Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may

behold the glory which I had with thee before the world was. And again, supporting his disciples against the tribulations they should encounter here below, If any man love me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be. And in another place, He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.

## MEDITATION XXI.

*The Praise of God.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. O praise the Lord, all ye works of his, in all places of his dominions; praise the Lord, O my soul. Let us magnify that great God, whom angels praise, whom dominions adore; before whom, powers fall down and tremble; whose excellent glory cherubim and seraphim proclaim with loud incessant voices. Let us then bear a part too in this heavenly song, and together with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, laud and magnify that glorious name. Let us tune our voices up with theirs; and though we cannot reach their pitch, yet will we exert the utmost of our skill and power, in this tribute to the same common Lord; and say with them, as poor mortals are able, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of thy glory; glory be to thee, O Lord most high.

For these are the happy spirits, who offer a sacrifice of pure praise before the throne of God continually, who are ever wrapt in the contemplation of his perfections; and see them, not like us, through a glass darkly, but near at hand, and face to face. What tongue can express, what thought conceive, the admirable beauty, the exact order, the numberless multitude of this heavenly host; the inexhaustible source of joy springing from the

beatific vision; the fervent love which ministers delight without torment; the ever-growing desire, which rises with their satisfactions, and the grateful satisfactions which crown that desire; a desire always eager, and never uneasy, always full, and never cloyed; the blessedness derived down to them, by their inseparable union to the fountain of all bliss; the light communicated to them from the original light; the happy change into an immutable nature, by seeing the immutable God as he is, and being transformed into the likeness of him they see!

But how, alas! should we hope to comprehend the divinity and bliss of angels so far above us, when we feel ourselves unable to find out the nature and perfections of this very soul within us? What sort of being must this be, which inspires a lump of dead flesh with life and activity, and yet, when most desirous so to do, cannot confine its thoughts to holy exercises? What a mixture of power and impotence is here? How great, and yet, how poor and little is this principle, which dives into the secrets of the Most High, searches the deep things of God, and expands itself to celestial objects, at the same time that it is forced to employ its talent in the invention of useful arts, and to serve the necessities of a mortal life? What sort of creature is this, that knows so much of other things, and so little of itself? So ingenious in matters abroad, so perfectly in the dark to what is done at home? Specious, but very disputable notions have indeed been advanced concerning the origin of our soul, but all we know of it amounts at last to this: That it is an intellectual spirit, created by the Almighty power of its Divine maker, endued

with such an immortality as he was pleased to qualify it for; enlivening and sustaining a body subject to change, corruption, and death, and liable to all the unequal affections of fear and joy, and every turbulent passion, that in their turns exalt and depress, enlarge or contract its powers.

And what an amazing thing is this now! The more we attend to it, the more we shall find ourselves lost in wonder. When we read, or speak, or write of God, the great Creator of the universe, we can deliver ourselves clearly and distinctly, though at the same time his perfections be too vast for our words to express, or our minds to comprehend; the subject, not of an adequate conception, but of an awful astonishment. But when we descend lower, and treat of angels, and created spirits, of souls united to bodies, and beings of the same level with, or a condition inferior to our own; we are not able to support our ideas with proofs so incontestible; and find it impracticable to satisfy ourselves or others in the inquiries concerning them. Why then should we, to so very little purpose, hover uncertainly about these lower regions, and spend our time and pains in groping in the dark? No, let our minds rather enlarge their thoughts, and take a nobler range; let them leave all created objects behind, and run, and mount, and fly aloft: and, taking faith to the assistance of reason, fix their eyes with the utmost intenseness our nature will bear, upon the Creator, the universal cause. Yes, I will make a ladder, like that of Jacob, reaching from earth to heaven, and as by rounds, go up from my body to my soul, from my own soul to that eternal Spirit that made it; who sustains, preserves it; always with me, about me, above me; thus skipping over all the intermediate stages of being, and

re-uniting my own soul to Him, from whom it came, and in whose image it was created.

Whatever bodily eyes can discern, whatever leaves impressions upon my imaginative faculty, shall be resolutely set out of the way, as a hindrance to that more abstracted contemplation, which my mind is desirous to indulge. A pure and simple act of the understanding, is that which must carry me up, and boldly soar at once to the Creator of angels, and souls, and all things. And happy is that soul, which refusing to be detained by low and viler objects, directs its flight to the noblest and most exalted, and, like the eagle, builds its nest in the top of the rocks, and keeps its eye steady upon the Sun of Righteousness; for no beauty is so charming, no pleasure so transporting, as that with which our eyes and mind are feasted, when our greedy sight and eager affections are determined to our God and Saviour, as to their only proper centre; when, by a wondrous mystical, but true and spiritual act of vision, we see him who is invisible; behold a light far different from this, which cheers our senses, and taste a pleasure infinitely sweeter than any this world and its joys can afford: for this is a short and insincere pleasure; this is a dim and feeble light, confined to a narrow space, always in motion from us, and in a few hours put out by constant returns of darkness: these are enjoyments which the great Creator hath distributed to brutes, nay, to the vilest of insects, in common with mankind; and therefore let us thirst and aspire after such as are truly Divine; for what even swine and worms share with us, cannot deserve the name of light and pleasure, but, in comparison of those more refined, are to be esteemed no better than pain and night.

## MEDITATION XXII.

*Vision and Enjoyment of God.*

This supreme and immutable Being, this glorious sun that never sets, this true, unclouded, and eternal light, the light of angels and men, cannot indeed be seen with mortal eyes, nor must we hope in this life to approach it; that blessing is reserved for glorified saints in heaven; and therein chiefly does the excellence of their reward and happiness consist. But yet are we not even now shut out from all perception of it neither: for to believe in, to meditate upon, to understand, and ardently to thirst after God, to make him the sole object of our thoughts and desires; this is in some sense to see, and to possess him. And since our capacity extends thus far at present, let us exert those little powers we have; let our voices be lifted up on high, and our souls make God their study; and let us, to the best of our ability, entertain him with his own praises. For it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that the creature should publish the goodness of the Creator; since he created us for the manifestation of his glory, though he stand in no need of any glory we can give him, nor can we add to what he hath already.

For he is power incomprehensible, possessing all things, and self-sufficient. Great is our Lord, and great is his power, yea, and his wisdom is infinite. Great is our Lord and marvellous, and worthy to be praised. Let this then be the object of my love;

this the subject of my song; this the ground of my labour and studies. And let my mind, and tongue, and hands, be continually exercised in desiring, speaking, singing, writing of him. Let the delights of this heavenly rhetoric be my daily food and feast, that, filled with this Divine nourishment, I may cry out with the most earnest contention of heart and voice, with joy and gladness, and most fervent zeal, and proclaim the excellences of my God.

Most great, most gracious, most mighty, most just, most merciful, omnipresent and incomprehensible Lord God! Thou art invisible and yet seest all things, unchangeable and changest all things; immortal, without bound, without end, unspeakable, unsearchable, unmoved, and giving motion to all things; fearful and glorious; to be honoured and reverenced, and adored with the most profound humility; never new, never old; and yet making all things new, and consuming their gayest pride with age, though they regard it not.

Always in action, and yet always at rest: sustaining all things, and yet feeling no burthen; creating, protecting, nourishing, maintaining, improving all things. Thou seekest, and yet thou lackest not; thou lovest without passion, art jealous without disturbance; thou repentest without remorse; art angry without perturbation; changest thy works, but not thy resolution; thou receivest what thou hadst never lost; art never poor, and yet rejoicest in the gaining of sinners; art not covetous, and yet expectest thy own with usury; and art pleased to account thyself a debtor to them who do good for thy sake.

But who, alas, can do, who is possessed of any good, which is not thine already? Thou payest

debts, and yet owest nothing: Thou forgivest debts, and art no loser by thy mercy: Thou givest life and being to all; art every where, and all in all: Thou mayest be felt and perceived, but not seen; art distant from no place, and yet far from the ungodly! For where thou art not by thy grace and favour, thou still art present by thy observation and vengeance. Thou communicatest thyself to all, but not to all equally. To some things thou impartest being, but not life, or sense, or understanding. To some, being and life, but not sense and understanding. To some again, being, and life, and sense, but not understanding. To some, lastly, thy bounty extends so far, as to bestow all these. And though thou always art the same, perfectly consistent with thyself, yet nothing is more different than that vast variety, of gifts and dispensations, wherein thy different influences are shed abroad upon different sorts of creatures.

We are in continual pursuit of thee, and though thou move not away from us, yet can we not apprehend thee. Thou possessest all things, compassest all, surmountest all, upholdest all things.

Thou teachest the hearts of the faithful without the formality of words, and speakest to them without the noise of articulate sounds. Thy wisdom reacheth from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly doth she order all things. Thou art neither enlarged by any addition of space, nor changed by any revolution of time. Thou inhabitest the light, which no man can approach; indivisible, because strictly and simply one, having no parts, filling all things with the whole of thyself.

Finite minds cannot distinctly conceive, nor artful expressions declare, nor whole volumes and libra-

ries explain the depths and intricacies of this mystery. For what can describe that greatness which is above all quantity, and that transcendent goodness which is above all quality? This is perfect goodness indeed; and therefore none is truly good but thou alone, with whom to intend is to finish, and to will is to be able to perform.

Thou madest all things out of nothing, merely because it was thy good pleasure so to do. Thou possessest all things, not because thou needest any: Thou governest all without care or toil, and nothing in heaven above, or in earth, no not in hell beneath, hath power to countermand, or in any degree to disturb thy regular management, or break the beauteous order of thy universe.

Thou art not the author of any evil: this is what even that power, which can do all things, cannot do; for the being able to do this would argue a defect, and not a perfection of power. Nor canst thou repent of any thing thou hast done, because thy wisdom always does the best: nor canst thou be disordered with any tumultuous passions, for these are the tempests and commotions of weak minds: nor could the danger or ruin of the whole world be any detriment to thee, for that were to have a happiness depending on thy own creatures: nor canst thou approve or commend any wicked action, for that were a blemish to thy holiness, and would make thee cease to be God.

Thou never liest, because thou art eternal truth. By thy bounty alone we are created. By thy justice we are punished for our offences. And by thy clemency we are delivered from vengeance and destruction. No material being, whether earthly or heavenly body, no active principle which can affect

our senses, ought to be worshipped for thee; for thou alone hast self-existence, and never changest from what thou art. Hence is thy name Jehovah, denoting that thou art always the same, and thy years shall not fail. These, and many other necessary and saving truths, thy word hath taught me, the knowledge of which, I acknowledge to be thy special favour, to me entirely unworthy. For here I learn, that thou art the one, the true God, without body, parts, or passions: and that no part of thy substance is capable of change or corruption, compounded or made. This makes it evident, that no bodily eye can discern thee, and that no mortal can see thee in thy proper essence: hence it is also plain, that from the same cause, which enables angels to behold thee now, we also after this life shall be enabled to behold thee. But even those glorious and intellectual spirits cannot see thee in all points as thou art; for thy mysterious unity of essence, in trinity of persons, as it hath nothing like itself, so it is fully comprehended by nothing but itself.

## MEDITATION XXIII.

*The Holy Trinity.*

Thou my God art but one with regard to thy nature, but the persons to whom this nature is communicated are several: and thus in different respects thou art capable and incapable of becoming the object of number and measure and weight. We do not acknowledge any beginning of that goodness whereof thy essence consists, but believe all things whatsoever to be from and by and in this: and that there is no other thing good, except so far as it participates of, and receives its goodness from thee.

O Lord omnipotent, thou great Three-One whose Almighty power possesses, governs and fills all things; yet so as that the greatest hath not more, nor the least less, but so as to be all in all, and all to be in thee; as it is written, Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I climb up to heaven thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also; if I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. Thus art thou present with every thing, and every thing with thee: not by any local extension, but by thy virtue and power, and communication of thyself.

Now since thy nature is simply and inseparably one, we must not so conceive of the Trinity, as if the persons in it could be really separated from one

another. This is indeed distinguished into three, and each person hath a different name and title; but still no name belongs to any one of them, which does not at the same time refer to the rest, according to the different properties and mutual relations of each to other. The Father includes the notion of a Son; the Son that of a Father; The Holy Spirit, Father and Son both. And all those titles used to express the power, and essence, and perfections; and whatever is included in the name of God, belongs to every person equally. There is not, therefore, any thing which may be truly affirmed of the Father as God, but may with equal truth be affirmed of the Son, or Holy Ghost, as God. We say that the Father is God by nature, so we say likewise that the Son and the Holy Ghost are; and yet they are not three Gods by nature, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one and the self-same God.

So that our understanding embraces but one undivided essence, though for our more distinct conception of this essence, we distinguish the several subsistences in it, by calling them different persons. But still, that this plurality of persons does not infer a plurality of beings, is manifest from hence, that the name of each person has a necessary respect to the other two. If I mention the Father, I include the Son; if the Son, I include the Father; if the Spirit, I must unavoidably be understood, to refer to some whose spirit this is, and so imply Father and Son both. This is the true faith; this is the result of sound doctrine, such as Almighty God hath taught in his Word, and by its ministry educated me in the belief and full persuasion of.

In this faith, which I do not only profess with all possible sincerity, but thankfully acknowledge to be thy gracious gift for the benefit and salvation of my soul, I call upon my God. And good reason have I to be thankful for this gift, since the believing soul lives by faith, and by hope embraces that at present, which it shall one day see in thee. To thee therefore I come, with a mind thus enlightened, happily brought out of the dark night of ignorance, to the knowledge of thy divine truth; and delivered from the seducing charms of a treacherous and calamitous world, to taste the sweets of that love, which places all its hopes and joys in thee: even thee, O blessed and glorious Trinity in unity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; my God, my Lord, my Comforter; Love, mercy, and communion of grace.

O thou that begettest! O thou that art begotten! O thou that begettest us again to a new life! Source of light, light of light, distributer of light; the spring, the stream, the watering, the one of whom, the one by whom, the one in whom are all things! For in all three is but one essence, one power, one goodness, one blessedness, from and by and in whom, whatever else is blessed, receives its blessedness; my soul would place its trust in thee.

## MEDITATION XXIV.

*God the True Life.*

O God, the true life of and by and in whom all things live, the common source of all good, our faith in thee excites, our hope exalts, our love unites us. Thou commandest us to seek thee, and art ready to be found; thou biddest us knock, and openest when we do so. To turn from thee, is to fall into ruin and death. To turn to thee, is to rise to life and glory. To abide in thee, is to stand fast and secure from danger. No man loses thee, who does not suffer himself to be deceived: no man seeks thee, who does not submit to instruction and reproof; no man finds thee, who does not seek after thee with a clean heart and purified affections. To know thee is life; to serve thee is freedom; to enjoy thee is a kingdom; to praise thee is the joy and happiness of the soul. I praise and bless and adore thee, with heart and voice and every faculty; I worship thee, I glorify thee, I give thanks to thee for thy great glory, for thy great goodness, for thy innumerable and inestimable mercies, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

I humbly beseech thee, O blessed Trinity, to come to me, to abide with me, to reign in me, to make this heart of mine a holy temple, a fit habitation for thy majesty. I entreat the Father by the Son, the Son by the Father, the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son, that all those vicious dispositions may be removed far from me, which might give offence to those eyes which cannot behold iniquity;

and that all those virtues may be implanted, and grow, and flourish, and abound in me, in which the God of unity delights. O thou Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible! keep, I beseech thee, the work of thy own hands, who trusts in thy mercy alone for safety and protection. Guard me with the power of thy grace, here and in all places, now and at all times, within and without, before and behind, above and below; let thy holy angels pitch their tents round about me, and may thy Holy Spirit so possess himself of all the passes to my heart, that the treacherous enemy of souls may have no place left open, whereby to make his approach.

Thou art the guardian and defender of all that depend upon thee; without whose watchful care none can be safe; without whose mighty power none is a match for the dangers and temptations which every moment beset him. Thou art God, and there is none beside thee, in heaven above, or in earth beneath. Thou art great, and dost wondrous things. Who can recount, who can conceive them? Honour and praise are thine; angels and spirits, and all the creation join in setting forth thy glory, and paying the constant humble homage due from creatures to their Creator, from servants to their Lord, from subjects and soldiers to their victorious Leader and universal King.

To thee the pure and lowly in heart, to thee the souls of the righteous, to thee the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, to thee the numerous orders of purified spirits, sing hymns of joy perpetually; fall down before thy throne, cast their crowns at thy feet, and with profoundest reverence adore the brightness of thy majesty. Not only these, but man,

a valuable part of the creation, since formed in thy resemblance, and placed chief in honour of all things here below, he joins in praises too, though not able to discharge the duty, with the same noble and exalted zeal as the bright hosts of heaven. Nay, even I the last and least of men, laden with sin and frailty, do yet desire to magnify thee worthily, and to love thee perfectly. Help me, my God, my life, my strength, assist the desires thou canst not but approve, and make me capable of glorifying thee. Shed abroad thy light in my heart, put thy word in my mouth, that my heart may be filled with thy praise, and my tongue may sing of thy glory and honour all the day long.

But because praise is not comely in the mouth of a sinner, and I alas! am a man of unclean lips, purge me I beseech thee, from all manner of impurity; touch my heart and tongue with a coal from thy altar; wash away my filth, and purify all my dross, so shall I be able to offer thee the sacrifice of praise. And when I do so, be thou graciously pleased to accept the little I can give; according to the inclination and sincerity of my heart, accept the calves of my lips. Let my prayer be set forth in thy presence, and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice. Let the continual, and the most delightful remembrance of thee, diffuse a constant joy through my whole soul, and transport it with a most ardent love of invisible blessings, that my affections may rise from earth to heaven, from temporal objects to eternal, and from the dark confused view of the creature, to the astonishing and beatific vision of the Creator.

O eternal truth, and true love, and beloved eter-

nity! my soul panteth after thee day and night; on thee all my hopes and thoughts are fixed, and in the enjoyment of thee are all determined. He that knows thee, knows truth and eternity; for thou art seated on high, above all; whom, when this life of dimness is dispersed, and the veil of mortal flesh drawn aside, we shall see as thou art. At present the language wherewith others accost me is, Where is thy God? and the question I often put to thee is, Where art thou now, my God? I now and then take breath and seem to live, when I pour out my heart before thee, in the voice of joy and thanksgiving; but even in the midst of mirth, a damp comes over my spirits, because my soul falls back again from these pleasing exercises; and even when most desirous to mount up above the highest heavens, feels itself dragged down into a dark and great deep, or rather finds itself to be no better than a dark and great deep.

In this abyss indeed sometimes I perceive some glimmerings of light, from that faith which thou hast kindled, to shine in the darkness. This sometimes rouses me in David's strain, Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Still put thy trust in God: His word is a lanthorn to my feet, and a light unto my paths. Still trust in God till the night wear off, and the wrath of God, of which we were some time children, be over-past, and the overflowings of ungodliness be carried clean away. The remains of these miseries we must be content to carry about us, while burdened with a body dead because of sin, till such time as the shades and thick clouds be dispelled by the dawn of the day of life. Put thou thy trust in God and tarry his pleasure: for in the morning

I shall stand before him, and behold his glory, and be filled with his praise. Even his, who shall quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us. His, who shall make us light, that we may be children of the day, and not any longer of the night, nor of darkness. For we were sometimes darkness, but now are we light in the Lord, but such we are, as yet by faith only, and not by sight and fruition. For we are saved through hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope.

The numerous progeny of angels and celestial spirits do indeed glorify thy name after a manner very different from ours. They have no need to study the Holy Scriptures, and learn from thence the glories of thy essence. They see the blessed Trinity face to face, and read in thee the counsels of thy eternal will and wisdom: they read, and choose, and love all thy good pleasure; and what they read, they never lose the remembrance of. Nor shall this book ever be shut to them; because thou art ever present with them, the same to all eternity, exhibiting thyself continually to their understandings. O blessed spirits, who are thus enabled to offer thee the tribute of their praise without any mixture of infirmity, without any interruption, without the alloy of anxious care and sorrow, who drink of thy pleasures, as out of a river, and exult with the sweet transports of joy unspeakable. For their praise and their joy flow both from the same source; and they who always see thee, cannot but always praise, and always rejoice in thee.

But we poor feeble mortals, weighed down with a body of corruption, placed at a vast distance from the bright beams of thy countenance, and distracted with variety of worldly cares and events,

are not in a condition of glorifying thee worthily. Our prospect is but dark and very remote, and the little we are able to do, is by the help of faith, and not by sight. But those celestial spirits wait about thy throne, and act by sight, and not by faith. This gives them a capacity of knowing, and loving, and praising, above what the present state of flesh and blood will admit, even the most exalted saint upon earth to attain to. But notwithstanding the different manner and value of their more perfect and our feebler praises, still thou art the same God, the common Father and Creator of angels and men. The sacrifice is the same offered in heaven and in earth, and centres all in thee at last, from whatsoever quarter it come. Nor do our weakest essays, when compared with their noblest performances, discourage us from hoping, that we shall one day, by thy bounteous mercy, be received up to the same blissful mansions, made members of the heavenly choir, and in their company, see and adore and praise thy glorious name for ever. In the meanwhile Lord, grant me thy assistance, that while I sojourn in this mortal body, I may do all for which my present circumstances are qualified: that my heart may be sensibly affected with thy goodness, my tongue continually speak of thy honour, and all my bones say, Lord, who is like unto thee?

Thou art that God Almighty, three in person, but one in substance; the Father begotten of none, the Son only begotten of the Father, the Holy Ghost proceeding from, yet ever remaining in, the Father and Son both. When we were nothing, thy power gave us being: when we were lost by sin, and worse than nothing, thy inestimable mercy

contrived a wonderful method of restoring us to a new, and spiritual, and better life. O suffer us not to be insensible and unthankful under so gracious a dispensation! Help us to walk worthy of thy manifold, thy unspeakable mercies; and increase in us daily thy graces; strengthen our faith, exalt our hope, and inflame and enlarge our charity.

Enable us, by the powerful influence of thy blessed Spirit, to continue steadfast in the belief of thy truth, and plentifully to bring forth the fruits agreeable to that belief; that so, by a true faith, and a suitable practice, thy mercy may at last bring us to the attainment of everlasting salvation; that we may be with thee where thou art, and see thee as thou art, and adore the brightness of thy majesty, and join our hearts and voices with those whom thou hast already admitted to that glorious sight, in hymns of joy and praise. Saying with all the company of heaven, Glory to the Father whose wisdom created us; Glory to the Son, whose love redeemed us; Glory to the Holy Spirit, whose grace sanctified us; Glory to the almighty and undivided Trinity, whose works are inseparable, and dominion without end. To thee belongs praise, and thanksgiving, and honour, and blessing; and therefore all honour, and power, and thanks, and praise be unto thee our God, for ever and ever.

## MEDITATION XXV.

*Zeal in the Praise of God.*

Pardon, O gracious Lord, pardon and pity most tender Father, my wretched ignorance and manifold imperfections. Do not reject my forwardness as rash and over-bold, because I who am but a servant, (O that I were but a good, and not a careless and unprofitable, and therefore a wicked and most unworthy servant) presume to praise and adore the great and terrible God, and when I do so, feel not my heart touched with that deep contrition, nor my eyes overflowing with tears, nor my soul humbled with that awful reverence and godly fear, which best becomes my vileness and thy majesty. For sure, if angels themselves fall down and tremble before thee, it is but fit that so sinful a creature as I, should approach thee with dread and sorrow; with sad apprehensions of the justice I have provoked to anger; and constant lamentations of my own guilt and unworthiness; that I should exceedingly fear and quake, and never come into thy presence, but with a pale dejected countenance, with weeping eyes and shivering limbs. This I am sensible I ought, and this I wish to do; but yet I do it not because I cannot do what I sincerely wish I could, and wonder greatly that I cannot bring myself to do. But who is able to do this, without the assistance of thy grace? For, as our salvation itself is entirely thy gift, so every pious disposition, which

tends to qualify us for it, is of thy great and free mercy.

O wretched man! whose heart is so hard, so stupid, as not to be broken with the terrors of the great God, when he appears before thee and takes upon him to publish thy praise! O flinty creature, more impenetrable than the nether mill-stone, whose eyes do not melt even into floods of tears, when the least of all the servants expostulates with his Master, man with God, the creature with his Creator, dust and ashes with him who made me out of nothing! Behold, O Lord, I lay myself open before thee, and do not spare to tell all the world, the mean and guilty reflections with which my thoughts upbraid me when alone. I only beg, that thou who art rich in mercy, wilt impart to me out of thy abundance; and from the treasures of thy goodness let me receive something which may be graciously accepted by thee. For we can only serve thee of thy own; and if at any time thou art pleased with our endeavours, those very endeavours are of the ability which thou thyself didst first vouchsafe to give us.

Do thou, therefore, from whom every good gift cometh, strike this rock, that the waters of holy sorrow may flow out abundantly: and when this sinful soul attempts to pay its tribute of praises and thanksgiving, let it be done with that becoming mixture of humility and remorse, of profound reverence and inward purity, and holy joy, with which they who love thee perfectly, and praise thee worthily, feel their hearts affected; such as may entitle me to all those spiritual comforts described in Scripture; when it is said, O taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Blessed is the man that

trusteth in him. Blessed is the people that can rejoice in thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are thy ways, who passing through the valley of weeping make it a well, and go from strength to strength, till they appear in Sion. And, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And again, Blessed, Lord, are they that dwell in thy house, they will be always praising thee.

## MEDITATION XXVI.

*Love to the Saviour.*

O BLESSED Jesus, my sacrifice and ransom, the delight and desire of my soul, God of God! mercifully assist the prayers of thy humble servant. On thee I call, to thee I cry with a loud voice, and from the very bottom of my heart. Thy presence I invite into my soul, O enter there and fit it up for thyself, that it may not offend thee by spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but be holy and without blemish. For sure a clean dwelling only can be acceptable to the purity of so Divine an inhabitant. Do thou therefore sanctify me, a vessel made by thy own hand; and make me fit for thy own use: purge out all the remains of wickedness; fill me with thy grace, and keep me ever in that fulness, that I may be built up a holy temple, an habitation such as my God will not disdain here and for ever! O holy Jesus, of more value than gold and precious stones, and dearer to me than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures this world can afford!

But what does all I have said amount to, my God, my only hope? Alas! I say as much as I can, though in no degree what I ought, upon so glorious a subject. O that I were capable of expressing thy excellences in as perfect and becoming a manner as the melodious choirs of angels do in their perpetual concerts of praise! How gladly would I then spend all my breath, and even warble out my soul

in songs of thanksgiving! With what ardent, what indefatigable devotion would I proclaim thy glories in the midst of thy congregations! But if I cannot do so much as becomes me, is that a reason why I should do nothing? No, I will exert my utmost powers, and speak my best, though I can never speak enough; for wo to them that are silent on this occasion; since them who are willing thou renderest able, making even the dumb to speak, and out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings perfecting praise. Wo then to them who do not employ their tongues to thy honour, since even the greatest masters of eloquence, who use them most and best, yet in effect are dumb, and say nothing to purpose, when they do not employ them to thy glory.

Who can set forth thy greatness as it deserves, O inexpressible power and wisdom of the Father! But, because no words are to be found sufficient to declare the omnipotent and omnipresent Word, I will at least contrive the best I can, and go the greatest length mortality is qualified for, till thou shalt receive me to thy own self, and enable me to express my praises in terms suitable to thy dignity and my duty. In the meanwhile it is my earnest request, that thou wouldst measure my present feeble essays, not by what I say, but what I desire to say. For it is the most vehement wish and longing of my soul, to give such praises as I know are becoming so great a Majesty to receive, and a due homage for a creature to give. And thou, my God, who knowest the secrets of all hearts, and art conscious to every motion of my soul, canst bear me witness, that heaven and earth, and all that therein is, are of small consideration with me in compari-

son with thee. Whatever else may challenge a place in my affection, ceases to be of any regard at all, and ought indeed to be hated, when put in the balance with my God. This is the real sense of my soul, with such unrivalled, such a fervent passion I love my God; and yet I am sensible withal, that this is less than thy due, and therefore desire above all things to love thee still more and more.

O grant that I may daily grow, and continue for ever steadfast in thy love, that I may pay thee all the affection I wish I could, all I owe and should pay; that thou mayest be my only aim and end, the only object of my thoughts. Let my days be spent in meditating upon thee incessantly; and my dreams present no other idea to my imagination; let my spirit confer with thee upon my bed, and remember thee alone when waking in the night season. Let the light of thy countenance shine through every corner of my heart, that under thy government and conduct I may proceed from strength to strength, till at length I see the God of gods in Sion; and whom I now can only take an imperfect glimpse of, through a dark and broken glass, I may then behold face to face, and know even as I am known. And since this is a blessing promised in a peculiar manner to the pure in heart, I intreat thee, by all that goodness and compassion, which hath delivered us from death eternal, let thy most powerful holy unction soften this tough, hard, rocky heart of mine, and render it susceptible of tender and good impressions, that the fire of compunction and holy zeal may be cherished there continually, and render it a daily living sacrifice unto thee.

Grant me the grace of a humble and contrite

spirit, that I may come into thy presence washed clean with tears of godly sorrow. And let my affections be so inseparably united to thee, that I may have no carnal desires left, but be utterly cold and dead to this world. Let me not so much as remember transitory things for the vehemence of that fear and love I bear to God; that these momentary trifles may no longer be matter of grief or joy, or concern to me; nor any flattering prosperity have power to bias or corrupt my heart, nor any terror of adversity to shake my constancy. And because the love of thee is strong as death itself, let this, I beseech thee, entirely possess and swallow up my soul; let that sweet and holy fire consume all the dross of worldly affections, that I may cleave to thee alone, and make it my constant meat and drink to do thy will, and know no refreshments but such as flow from the delightful remembrances of thee.

Send down, O Lord, send down into my heart thy precious odours, that I may be ravished with the fragrance of my heavenly spouse. Let the delightful relish of thy sweetness excite in me holy and eager desires, and be in me a well of living water springing up to everlasting life. Thy greatness, O my God, is unmeasurable, and therefore the love of thee ought to be so too: for sure no bounds ought to determine the gratitude and praise of those whom thou hast vouchsafed to redeem with thy own most precious blood. O tender lover of souls! O merciful Lord! O righteous Judge! to whom thy Father hath committed all judgment: Thou seest and hast declared how fit it is, that the children of this world should not in their generation be wiser than the children of light; that the sons of

night and darkness ought to be our pattern; and that it is just matter of reproach to us, if they shall love and pursue the perishing riches, and fleeting pleasures and advantages, with a more intense desire, and more unwearied endeavours, than thy own servants seek and love the source and sum of their true happiness: even thee, their God, who made them when they were not and redeemed them when otherwise it were better for them not to have been at all.

And if one man love another man so fervently, if a spouse be so fond of her beloved, as not, without the utmost impatience, and even inconsolable grief, to bear the absence of a friend so dear: what affection, what zeal, what ardent desire of constant union, ought that soul to express, whom thou hast betrothed and married to thyself by faithfulness and mercies manifold! How ought we to be conversing with, and enjoying the great God, the most amiable husband, who hath loved us and saved us after so astonishing a manner, and for our sakes done so many, so great, so kind, so wonderful things! For though the objects here below have indeed some delights peculiar to themselves, which attract our hearts, and kindle affections and desires proportioned to them; yet do not they affect us after the same manner, as thou our God, and the blessed objects above do. The righteous man rejoices in thee, because the love of thee is a calm and sweet enjoyment. For every breast thus disposed, is filled with an equal, secure and serene pleasure. But the love of the world and the flesh is ruffled with anxious fears and violent emotions; it utterly destroys the peace of the soul where it takes possession, and distracts it with cares and

suspicions, with jealousy and passions, and a thousand uneasy apprehensions.

Most justly, therefore, art thou the joy and delight of good men, because thou art the only heaven where they are at rest; and with thee alone is that life which brings quietness and assurance, settled and sincere pleasure. He that enters into thee, enters into the joy of his Lord, where fears of future evils have no place. Fixed in this most happy station, and secure from change or danger, he can speak comfort to his soul in these words of the Psalmist, This shall be my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. And again, The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing: he shall make me to lie down in green pastures, and send me forth beside the still waters.

O that it might please thee, holy and merciful Jesus, to fill my heart with such a love of thyself, as never can be quenched; to be ever present in my mind, that I may be filled with love, and burn with perpetual desires of thy company and enjoyment. Let this desire exalt my heart, and enable it to throw off that troublesome load of sensual and worldly affections, which now obstruct and press me down, and do but add to my miseries, instead of gratifying my inclinations. And having laid aside this weight, help me to run cheerfully and swiftly after the odour of thy ointments, still keeping on my course without incumbrance or diversion, till by thy gracious guidance I at last shall be received to thy own self, there to be feasted for ever with the pleasures of thy beauteous presence.

For two so different passions, a good and evil, a sweet and bitter, cannot dwell together in the same breast. And, therefore, if a man love any

thing besides thee, the love of God is not in him. O love of exquisite pleasure, and exquisite pleasure of love! Love, all delight without allay of torment; love, chaste and perfect, whose bright flame never can be extinct, but burns pure and cheerful to all eternity; my God, my Jesus, inflame my soul with this holy fire, pour thy transporting joys, thy inexpressible comforts abundantly into my heart; kindle there desires chaste and holy, peaceful and calm, pleasant and secure, that thus overflowing with delight, and inflamed with desire, I may love thee, my God, with all my heart, and soul, and strength. That thou mayest be in my mind, and mouth and sight, at all times, and in all places; and so refresh me, that no room may be left for any other, which are indeed no better than unfaithful and adulterous passions.

Hear me, my God; hear, thou light of my eyes; hear what I ask, and grant my petitions; and that thou mayest hear me effectually, do thou inspire and direct my petitions. O merciful and gracious Lord! let not my manifold offences stop thy ears against my prayers, nor shut out thy mercy from me: but let thy servant obtain his requests, though not for any merit of his own, yet for the sake of his merits and intercession in whom alone he trusts, and by whom alone he presumes to ask any thing: even the blessed Jesus, the Son of thy love, the one, the powerful mediator between God and man; who, with thee and thy blessed Spirit, liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen.

## MEDITATION XXVII.

*Prayer to Christ.*

O Lord Jesus, the anointed of God, the Word of the Father, who camest into the world on purpose to save sinners! I conjure thee by the most enlarged bowels of thy indulgent mercy, let me cease to do evil, learn to do well, and reduce all my actions to rule and due order; take away from me whatsoever is offensive to thee, and hurtful to myself; and implant in me all those virtues and graces which may conduce to my soul's advantage, and thy good liking and acceptance of me. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, but thou alone? Thou art a God infinite in goodness and power, justifying the ungodly, quickening them that lay dead in trespasses and sins, changing the hearts of men, and forming them into new and different creatures. Thy eyes behold my many and great imperfections: look down upon them with an eye of pity, send down thy hand of compassion from above, and remove far from me whatever is displeasing in thy sight. My spiritual health and diseases are both in thy sight, O strengthen, I beseech thee, and preserve the former, and in much mercy heal the latter.

Heal thou me, blessed Physician of souls, and so shall I be healed; hold thou me up, thou Almighty preserver of men, and so shall I be safe. Thou who givest medicines for the cure of our sickness, and sustainest that health which is thy own; thou

who repairest our breaches, and buildest up our decayed ruins with a word of thy mouth. If thou think fit (as I hope thou wilt) to sow the good seed in thy field my heart, the first part of that blessed work must be to prepare and correct the soil, by rooting out the weeds and thorns of vicious habits and dispositions, which else will choke the work, and make it unfruitful. O gracious Jesus! pour into me, I beg thee, the abundance of thy love, that there may be no remains of earthly or sensual desires or thoughts in my breast, but may thou and thy love reign unrivalled there, and possess my heart entirely. Write thy name in my mind, that thou and thy commands may be ever before my eyes. Kindle in my soul that holy fire which thou hast sent into the world, that it may melt away my dross, and qualify me for offering to thee the daily sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit.

Most merciful Redeemer, as thou hast given me the sincere desire, so give me the attainment of thy chaste and holy love, fervent as my desire, and entire as the sincerity with which I ask it. Let my head be waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that these may speak for me, and testify the greatness of my love, and the inward delights I feel, too big to be contained within my heart, and perpetually running over in tears of joy.

I frequently call to mind the devout addresses of thy servant Hannah, who came to thy tabernacle to beg a son from thee: and, upon each remembrance of her remarkable piety and perseverance in prayers, I find myself tormented with grief, and confounded with shame, for my own coldness and deadness in devotion. For, if she did not only weep, but continue weeping in hopes of obtaining a son

what affectionate complaints, what measure of tears become my soul, which comes to thee in prayer, which seeks and loves my God and Saviour, desiring to receive him, and be received to him! What sighs and groanings, what earnest gaspings, what impatient thirstings ought I to bring, who am in pursuit of my God day and night, and desire to love and to enjoy nothing but him only! O look then upon me, and extend thy mercy to me, for the sorrows of my heart are enlarged. Permit me to taste of thy heavenly comforts, and do not disdain that sinful soul, for which thou didst not grudge to die. Give me plenteousness of tears flowing from an affectionate heart, such as, by lamenting, may prevail for forgiveness of my sins, a release from the bands with which I have so long been tired, and a godly sorrow, which may produce spiritual and heavenly joy. That, if I cannot rise to the same exalted pitch of zeal, with some illustrious martyrs and confessors, and eminently devout men, whose bright examples I despair of coming up with; I may however not suffer myself to be outdone by the weaker sex, but be admitted to a share in thy kingdom with devout women.

Another instance of female devotion comes also often into my remembrance. Her, I mean, whose vehement affection for thee put her upon waiting at thy sepulchre; who, though thy disciples went away, would not depart with them, but sat there weeping, and deploring the supposed loss of her dear Lord, and rising frequently, returned to search the empty cave with anxious eyes, not trusting her own senses, but hoping and seeking still, in despite of their former reports, to see him whom her soul loved. She had, no doubt, examined the

grave with a most nice diligence before; but still her passionate desires could not be satisfied, that she had sought thee with sufficient care. For that which crowns and recommends every good work, is the virtue of perseverance. This person, then, because she loved more than the rest, and expressed that love by her weeping, and sought thee carefully with tears, and still continued seeking, notwithstanding so many former disappointments, obtained the preference above the rest, and had the honour to find, and see, and converse with thee, before any other person whatsoever.

Not only so, but she was made choice of, to be the first preacher of thy glorious resurrection. By her thou didst impart the joyful tidings to thy disconsolate disciples, and refresh their memories with thy promise of visiting them again, saying, Go tell my brethren, that I go into Galilee, there shall they see me. If then, this woman wept so tenderly, who sought the living among the dead, and touched thee with the hand of faith, how should that soul be affected, and how lasting ought that affection to be, which believes in the heart, and confesses with the mouth, a glorified Redeemer enthroned in heaven, and reigning over the whole world? What sighs and tears should breathe out from that heart, which loves nothing but thee, and above all things longs to gain a sight of thee; of thee, the only refuge and hope of the miserable, who art never addressed without a comfortable expectation of mercy?

In this confidence I entreat thee, for thy own sake, and for the glory of thy holy name, to grant me such a tender and affectionate sense of thy goodness, and my own unworthiness, that every

time I think, or speak, or read, or write of, upon every remembrance of, every approach to my God and Saviour, in the sacrifices of prayer and praise, my eyes may overflow with tears of remorse and love. Thou the King of glory, the teacher and pattern of all virtues, hast instructed us to weep, both by thy word, and by thy own example. Thou hast said, Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: and didst thyself shed tears of compassion for thy deceased friend, and yet more abundantly for the ungracious city of thy people, and its approaching destruction.

By thy most precious tears, and by all the wonderful instances of thy mercy for the relief of lost mankind, I beg the grace of tears and godly sorrow, which my soul vehemently thirsts after. I cannot attain to this, unless thou vouchsafe to give it me; for it is thy Holy Spirit alone that can bring water out of this rock, and soften the hearts of hardened sinners. This thou hast been pleased to communicate freely to many primitive and eminent saints, in whose pious footsteps I dare to tread. Send down thy former and thy latter rain, and water this dry soil with the dew of heaven, that I may with true compunction bewail my sin and misery; and kindle in my heart a fervent zeal, that I may be a burnt-offering to thee, a sacrifice of sweet savour in thy presence. And let my tears wash that polluted offering, that it may be presented clean and pure. For of these I shall still have daily need; because, though by the assistance of thy grace I consecrate myself never so devoutly and entirely to thy service, yet such is my frailty, that still in many things I shall offend. Grant me therefore this necessary grace, that I may taste of thy

cup, and quench my thirst, that my soul may ever pant after thee, and burn with the love of thee alone, regardless of any other object, and getting above the vanities of sense, and miseries of the world.

Hear me, my God; hearken, thou light of my eyes, grant me my request, and grant me to ask such things as thou delightest to give. Let not my manifold offences stop the current of thy grace, whose property it is to be a God hearing prayer, and always to have mercy. But, according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences, and think upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness.

O gracious Saviour, O merciful Lord Jesus, who wast pleased to die for our sins, and rise again for our justification, be also pleased, by that glorious resurrection, I beseech thee, good Lord, to raise me from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness: that so partaking now in the first and spiritual, I may be admitted to partake of the blessed and literal resurrection at the last day. Most mighty King of glory, who hast ascended with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven, and sittest enthroned at the right hand of the Father, draw me up to thee; that by thy powerful guidance, and more than magnetic force, I may run after the odour of thy ointments, and not faint. Draw this thirsty soul to the rivers of eternal pleasure, to the fountain of living water, that I may drink my fill, and live for ever, O God of my life.

They are thy own most comfortable words, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. O well of life! make good that gracious invitation to thy unworthy servant, that I may continually drink of thee, and quench my eager thirstings, and

according to thy most true promise, be so filled with thy Holy Spirit, that out of my belly may flow streams of living water. O well of life! give me drink out of thy pleasures as out of a river, satiate my soul with the delights of thy love, that I may lose all relish for vain, and sensual, and worldly joys, and fix my thoughts and desires on thee alone, and on thy sweet mercies; as holy David professes of himself, I remembered thine everlasting judgments, O Lord, and received comfort.

Shower down upon me the fructifying graces of thy good Spirit, which thou wert pleased to represent, by the waters promised to be given to them that thirst. Let all my desires and endeavours tend directly to that blissful place, whither we most firmly believe thee to have gone forty days after the resurrection. That nothing but my body may be detained any longer in this valley of misery here below: but my soul and all its faculties may be with thee. That where my best, my only treasure is, my incomparable best-beloved Jesus is, there my heart may be also. In this dismal deluge, the wide unfaithful sea of this tempestuous life, we are tossed and driven about by storms that blow from every quarter; without port or shelter; without one spot of dry ground for the weary dove to rest her foot upon; no peace, no calm, no security; but rocks and quicksands, wars and contentions, and enemies on every side; without are fightings, and within are fears.

Thou hast framed us out of a wonderful mixture of different parts, and joined heaven and earth together in one man. The earthly body presseth down the soul, and hence the mind thus unequally coupled is dragged back by its companion, moves

heavily and is soon tired with its journey, nay often languishes and sinks down in the middle of its course; is torn and wounded by the thorny cares and vanities through which its way lies: bruised by the roughness of the passage; hungry and hard bestead, and often ready to perish with thirst, in this dry, barren, desolate wilderness. Nor have I wherewithal to satisfy its cravings, being, alas! poor and destitute of my spiritual comforts. Therefore I flee to thee, my Lord and God, rich in mercies, and a bountiful giver of good gifts; imploring food in my necessity, refreshment for my weariness, balm for my wounds, and guidance for my wanderings. Behold, my soul stands at the door and knocks: O let that tender mercy of God, whereby thou glorious day-spring from on high hath visited us, open to this importunate beggar! Extend thy charity, and in a marvellous condescension take him in, that he may find refreshment and sweet repose in thee, and be fed with the bread of life, the bread of heaven; that thus sustained and strengthened, he may climb up the hill, and mounting on the wings of holy zeal, may be conveyed from this valley of tears, to the joys of the celestial kingdom.

O that my soul could fly like an eagle, bold and strong, without making any stop, or perching by the way, till it arrive at the beauties of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth! That it might feed there at the sumptuous table which thou hast prepared for the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem: and be led forth by its divine Shepherd into pleasant pastures, watered by fruitful streams: that so this heart, this tempest-beaten heart, might be brought at last into harbour, laid up and rest secure in thee, my God!

O thou, who didst command the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm, come down and walk upon the waves of my heart, that all its tumultuous passions may be composed into a profound tranquillity! that all may unite into that one of love, and that love be determined upon its own proper object, even thee my chief, my only good; that I may contemplate the delight of my eyes, my dear Lord, clearly and without interruption, free from the mists and dusts of trouble and confused thoughts. Let my spirit take sanctuary under the shadow of thy wings, and there be protected from the scorching heats of worldly cares; that lying close under that shelter it may sing securely with thy holy psalmist, I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is thou, Lord, only that maketh me to dwell in safety.

Yea, let it take its rest, my God, I pray thee, by having all the remembrance of evils laid to sleep; let it love righteousness, and hate iniquity. For what can be more delightful, more desirable, than in the darkness and distresses of this afflicted gloomy life to look up to, and pant after, the sweet enjoyment of God and everlasting bliss? Than thither in our minds and affections to ascend, and there continually dwell, where alone true joys are to be found? O loveliest, and most loving Jesus, when shall I be happy in the sight of thee? When shall I come and appear before the presence of my God? When shall I be feasted with thy beauty? When wilt thou bring my soul out of this dark loathsome prison, into the regions of light, that I may give thanks unto thy name, and taste the bitter cup of grief no more? When shall I be translated into thy beauteous palace, and hear the voice

of joy and salvation continually sounding in the dwellings of the righteous.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they will be always praising thee: Blessed, indeed, is the man, whom thou choosest and receivest to thyself, and blessed are the people whom thou takest to be thy own inheritance. Behold thy holy ones grow up before thee as a lily, they are filled with the pleasures of thy house, and thou givest them drink out of thy fulness: for thou art the fountain of life, and in thy light they see light. Such light, that though they are but a derived and secondary light, yet the bright beams of thee, the great original Light, are shed so plentifully upon them, that by virtue of this strong reflection, they shine forth as the sun, in thy presence and kingdom. O how goodly, how amiable, how delicious are the tabernacles of thy dwelling, thou Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; this sinful heart and flesh crieth out for the living God; it cries continually, and repeats this profession again and again, Lord, I have loved the beauties of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. As the hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I see the living God, whom my soul thirsteth after? When shall I see him in the land of the living? For in this land of the dying, where we now dwell, no mortal eye can see him. What shall I do, wretched man that I am! chained down to flesh and sense, and dragging after me a clog of corruption? What is this mise-

rable condition capable of? While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come: there is our settlement, and all our privileges, the hope of our high calling, the business and happiness of our lives, all in our native, in our heavenly country.

Wo is me, that I have so long dwelt in the tents of Kedar, and been constrained to sojourn among the enemies of my peace. O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest. I know no pleasure comparable to that of being with my Lord. It is good for me to draw near to God, to hold me fast by God. Grant me, therefore, gracious Lord, so close a union with thee, even while I am imprisoned in this frail body, as to make good the Apostle's observation, He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit. Arm my soul with the wings of contemplation, that it may soar up to thee; and, because my frailty, without thee, cannot but fall, support my soul, that it sink not into the bottom of this dark vale of sense: let not any interposition of the earth, eclipse the Sun of Righteousness, and obstruct the influence of his refreshing beams; but let his light direct, and his cherishing heat warm, my frozen heart, in my prospects and pursuits of high and heavenly things. For, from this instant, I desire to bend my course to the joys of eternal peace, and leaving the clouds and storms of these lower regions of the air, aspire to the quiet and serene, the bright and blissful mansions of etherial light above.

Hold thou up my heart with thy mighty hand, for without thee it cannot mount upward: I hasten to the place where sweetest and most profound

peace reigns undisturbed: O do thou assist and govern my flight, that by thy guidance I may come into those fruitful pastures, where thou feedest Israel with eternal truth; that my mind may dwell upon thee, the supreme Wisdom, who penetratest and governest all things. But while I aim at this ascent to thee, I find many objections and obstructions to my design: do thou, I beseech thee, remove and silence them all: command, and the tempest will be still: let my soul possess itself in quietness, and silently pass over all created objects to fix on thee: there, in her great Creator, let her eyes of faith, her desires, her hopes and thoughts, immoveably rest; and no object ever divert, none entertain her, but her true and chief good, her exquisite and endless joy.

There are, indeed, many contemplations, in which a devout mind feels wonderful satisfaction; but never can it attain to that sweet tranquillity and delight, as when it meditates on thee alone. For, O how great is thy goodness, and how great is thy beauty! and how transporting are those secret pleasures which overflow the hearts of thy beloved, who love, and seek, and desire to know nothing but thee! Happy are they who have no other hope: happy, whose constant employment is praying to, and conversing with thee: happy, whose solitude is spent in awful silence, and heavenly raptures, and constant watchfulness over themselves: happy, who, even while in this frail body, anticipate, so far as their condition will allow, the ineffable sweetness of their future glories.

By those life-giving wounds which thou didst condescend for our salvation to suffer on the cross, those wounds, from whence streamed forth that

precious blood by which mankind are redeemed from death eternal; wound, I beseech thee, this sinful soul of mine, for which thou didst not disdain to die: strike it through with a fiery dart of thy most fervent love, which nothing can resist: for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the joints and marrow; strike, therefore, gracious Lord, strike this hard heart of mine to the very quick; and let the waters of penitent and affectionate tears flow out in great abundance. Let me lament my present miseries day and night, and find no comfort till I am allowed to behold my fairest and best beloved spouse, my Lord and my God, in his heavenly bedchamber. That there, for ever gazing on thy beauteous face with thy chosen, I may fall down and adore thy Majesty: and, transported with rapturous and inexpressible joy, may cry out with them that love thee—Behold, I see what I have long desired; I am in full possession of my hopes; I am inseparably united to him in heaven, whom upon earth I loved with a most eager and impatient, a most sincere and undivided affection: this is he whom my soul so earnestly panted after, he whom I will praise and bless, and most devoutly adore; he, who liveth and reigneth my God for ever and ever. Amen.

## MEDITATION XXVIII.

*The Day of Adversity.*

Look down, O Lord, with pity and compassion upon a miserable sinner, doing the things he ought not, and enduring the things which he hath most justly deserved; every day multiplying his offences, and smarting daily for them under thy correcting rod. When I reflect upon my many and great provocations, I cannot but confess my sufferings light and gentle in comparison; and own they do by no means bear proportion to what I have incurred, and might expect. Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments. Yea, just and faithful is my God, and there is no iniquity in him. Thou sendest affliction, but thou sendest it upon creatures and upon sinners, and canst not therefore be charged with injustice or cruelty. For what is the utmost we groan under? How does this declare thy power, in comparison of that almighty instance of it, which commanded us into being, when we were not? How does this deserve the imputation of rigour, when set against that infinite mercy, which in wonderful pity redeemed and restored us to happiness and life, when sin had reduced us to a condition so lost and desperate, that even our being was become a curse to us?

I am abundantly convinced, that the events of this life are not left to the rash, uncertain dominion of blind chance, but under the steady governance and wise disposal of thy good providence. I know

thou lovest and takest care of all thy creatures, but more especially thy faithful servants, who repose all their hope and confidence in thy mercy, and in this confidence do cheerfully commit themselves, and all their affairs to thee. In this persuasion I most humbly pray thee, that thou wouldst deal with me not according to my sins, which have made me obnoxious to thy angry justice, but after thy own great mercy, which far exceeds not only mine, but the whole world's offences. And may it please thee, when thou thinkest fit to scourge my outward man, to strengthen my inward man with the grace of constancy and unwearied patience: that even in the bitterest anguish of my soul, thy goodness may still be most thankfully acknowledged, and thy praise at no time depart out of my mouth. Pity me, O Lord, and help me, according to what thou seest necessary for me both in body and soul. Thou knowest all things, and canst do all things, and livest for ever, and therefore wilt, I hope, consider my need and my infirmities, and extend mercy and relief in thy own time, and thy own way, which is always sure to be best and most expedient for us.

## MEDITATION XXIX.

*Pardon of Sins.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who didst, with hands stretched out upon the cross, submit to drink the bitter cup, of sufferings inconceivable, for the redemption of all mankind, vouchsafe to hear and help me this day: behold a wretch in extreme poverty, approaching to the endless treasure of thy rich mercy! O send me not away empty and despised! I come with all the cravings of spiritual hunger; let my soul, I pray thee, be filled with good things; at least deny me not some sustenance.

And, first of all, most holy Saviour, I freely turn my own accuser, and do confess against myself, all those transgressions and pollutions which render me unworthy of the least of thy mercies. Behold I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive and bear me: but if from this original defilement thou hast been pleased to wash and sanctify me, with shame I own I have defiled myself anew with more and greater, and more inexcusable sins. Those I was born in, I could not prevent: they were not my fault so much as my misfortune; but the filth I have wallowed in since, was entirely of my own choice and contracting, and the transgressions I am most concerned for, have been in the strictest sense my proper act and deed.

Nay, to add yet more to my confusion, I cannot but call to mind the great advantages of doing bet-

ter, which thou, according to thy wonted mercy, hast been pleased to afford me. Thou hast separated me from the conversation of sinners, and put into my heart good resolutions of avoiding their seducements, and following thee; of assembling with the generation of them that seek thy face, and walk in the paths of righteousness; of abandoning a sensual, and devoting myself to a mortified and spiritual and divine life. And I, insensible and ungrateful wretch that I am, in return for such inestimable benefits, have, even since my entrance upon this better course, done many and grievous things against thy holy laws, and my own good intentions. Instead of amending and forsaking my sins, I have added greatly to their number. Thus have I dishonoured my God, and stained and defaced that image of his, in which I was created, with pride and vain-glory, and many other natural deformities, with the dismal prospect of which my poor soul is tormented and afflicted, wounded and destroyed.

Behold, O Lord, my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are become like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. And unless thou, whose property is always to spare, and to have mercy, be pleased to put forth thy hand, and support me from sinking, I shall be irrecoverably lost, and swallowed up in the great deep. Hearken, O Lord, to my cry; look down and behold my misery, how proudly the adversary of souls insults against me, saying, God hath forsaken him, I will pursue him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him. But thou, O Lord, how long wilt thou forget me? Turn, I beseech thee, and deliver my soul; O save me for thy mercies' sake. Have compassion on thy child, whom thou hast made such, at the expense of infinite

travail and pain, and do not so far remember my wickedness, as to forget thy own goodness. What father is he, who will refuse to rescue his son from destruction? Or, what son is he who never offends, and whom the most affectionate parent chasteneth not with the rod of his love?

Consider, therefore, O my Lord and Father, that though I am a sinner, I am still thy soul, I cannot cease to be so by a double title, for thou art the author and giver, not only of my first and natural, but of my second, my spiritual and better life. Since therefore I have sinned, correct me as thou seest expedient: but when thy corrections have reformed me, deliver me up to thy Son. Can a mother forget the fruit of her womb? Nay, though she should forget, yet thou, our kinder Father, hast declared, that thou wilt not forget thy children. Behold I cry, and thou hearkenest not; I am tormented, and thou comfortest me not. What shall I do, or to whom shall I betake myself, when destitute of my only support, and cast out of the sight of thine eyes? O wretched creature! how great is the happiness from which, how great is the misery into which I am fallen! Whither was I going, and whither am I at last come? Where am I, and where am I not? What bliss was presented before me, and what horrors do I groan under! I aimed at peace and joy, but behold perplexity and misery! I die, and my Jesus is not with me; and sure better it were for me not to be at all, than to be without my Jesus; better not to live, than to live without Him, who is the very life of my life.

But, O my dearest Jesus, where are thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindnesses which have been ever of old? Will the Lord keep his anger for ever,

and will he be no more intreated? Be favourable, I beseech thee, and turn not now away thy face from him, for whose redemption thou didst not turn it away heretofore from shame and spitting. I confess, O Lord, that I am a sinner, a great and grievous sinner: my conscience reproaches me with guilt continually, and sets before mine eyes that hell and damnation, which, I am sadly sensible, are the deserved wages of my evil doings. I know too no remorse, no repentance of mine can be a sufficient satisfaction to thy offended justice; and therefore I take sanctuary in thy mercy alone; that mercy which can never be overpowered by any greatness, any number of offences. Do not, I beseech thee, most merciful Lord, still write bitter things against me, nor enter into judgment with thy servant, but, according to the multitude of thy mercies blot out all my offences. O what will become of me at that dreadful day, when the books of all consciences shall be laid open, and the Judge shall say of me, this is the man, and these are are his works! What shall I do, or whither shall I flee, when the heavens shall declare my unrighteousness, and the earth shall rise up against, and open her mouth upon me? Alas! I shall not have one word to allege in my own vindication or excuse, no plea to make in bar to sentence passing upon me; but, with a guilty and dejected countenance, stand trembling and amazed before thy judgment seat.

O misery! misery! What shall I say? I will cry unto thee, my Lord and God; for why should I perish, and languish away in silence? and yet if I speak, my pains will not be assuaged; and if I hold my peace, I am racked with secret anguish. Mourn, my soul, mourn and weep, like a disconsolate widow,

over the husband of thy youth. Howl, wretched thing, and lament, for thy sins against thy kindest and best friend, which have provoked his displeasure. Nay, but, O mighty avenger, do not let loose thine indignation upon me; for it is not in the nature of a mortal to sustain the power of thy wrath. Have mercy, lest I sink in utter despair; and, when my guilty reflections deject me most, let me find some refreshing glance of hope, that I be not quite swallowed up in guilt and confusion. It is true, I have lost that innocence which should preserve me, and given thee just reason to damn me: but thou hast not, canst not have lost that property, which is used to prevail for the salvation of those who have deserved damnation.

Thou, O Lord, willest not the death of a sinner, neither hast thou any pleasure in the destruction of him that dieth; so far from that, that thou thyself hast died to the intent that they who before were dead might live. Thy death hath killed the death of sinners, and from that instant thou diedst, their life commenced. Since therefore our living depended upon thy dying, suffer me not, I beseech thee, to die, now thou art restored to life for evermore: but if thy death reconciled me, much more let thy life save me. Send down thy hand from above, and deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, let them not triumph over me, neither let them say, We have devoured him.

Who, blessed Jesus, who can ever suffer himself to distrust thy mercy and goodness, after having reconciled us to God, and ransomed us from hell and death, with thy own dearest blood, even when we where rebels and declared enemies? Under the shelter of this mercy I dare approach the throne of

grace; and thus protected and encouraged, I run, I call, I cry for pardon, and knock importunately, incessantly, till thou open, and take pity upon me. For if thou didst of thy own mere motion call us to a pardon which we never sought, how shall we not much rather obtain a pardon upon our own request, and that request grounded upon encouragements, and commands, and promises, which thou thyself hast given us?

Look not upon me, therefore, merciful Saviour, in the capacity of a sinner, which would awaken thy justice; but consider me as thy creature, and let that soften and enlarge the bowels of thy mercy. Remember not thine anger, to which guilt hath made me obnoxious, but remember thy never-failing compassions, of which my misery renders me a fit object. Overlook my pride, which incensed thee, and observe my humility and affliction, which implores thee. And what indeed is Jesus but a Saviour? By the importance of thy blessed name, and by all that goodness which so fully answered its most extensive signification, arise, I conjure thee, to help me, and say to my poor soul, I am thy salvation. I entertain very assured expectations of thy bounty, because thou hast taught me to ask, and seek, and knock: and therefore what I do, is not an act of bold and rash presumption, but of becoming trust and faithful obedience.

Thou therefore, Lord, who commandest me to ask, grant that I may receive; thou hast put me upon seeking, let me be happy in finding; thou hast bidden me knock, open when I do so; strengthen a weak, restore a lost, raise and quicken a dead wretch; and be graciously pleased to direct and govern my several faculties, senses, thoughts and

actions, in doing that which is well-pleasing in thy sight: that, for the future, I may serve thee, live to thee, and entirely devote myself to the obedience of thee. I know, O Lord, the whole of what I am is thy due, as my Creator; I am sensible that more than I am is thy due, as my Redeemer. And, had I it, I should owe thee as much more than I am, as thou, who gavest thyself to be man for my sake, art greater than the man for whom thou wert given. But this poor self is all I have to offer in return, and even this I could not offer without thee: Accept me. therefore, I beseech thee, and draw me to thyself, that I may from henceforth be thine by imitation and resemblance, by obedience and love, who am already all thy own, as thy creature, and thy purchase. Even thine, O blessed Saviour, who livest and reignest, for ever and ever. Amen.

## MEDITATION XXX.

*Divine protection.*

O Lord God Almighty, three persons, and one substance, eternal and omnipresent, before all, and in all, God blessed for ever! I consecrate to thy use, and commit into thy custody, this day, and for my whole life, my body and my soul, my sight and hearing, my taste, touch, and smelling; all my thoughts and affections; my words and actions; all without, and all within me; my sensitive and intellectual faculties, my imagination and memory; my faith and my perseverance; beseeching thee in mercy to take charge of them day and night, and guard them safe from all the dangers and temptations which beset me, and attempt to enter at these avenues every hour and moment. Hear me, O blessed, holy Trinity, and preserve me from all evil, and all scandal, and especially from all wilful sin. Protect me from the subtle treachery, and violent assaults, and perpetual hostilities of evil spirits, and shield me from the malice of all my enemies, visible and invisible; and, under thy mighty protection, conduct me safe at last to those blissful mansions, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee, inhabited by Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs, confessors and virgins, and all the holy men and women who have walked in thy fear, and done the will of their heavenly Father faithfully from the beginning of the world.

Root out from me, I pray thee, all confident

boasting, spiritual pride, arrogance and haughtiness of spirit, and beat down my soul with true compunction for my sins, and a profound unaffected humility. Open a vent for the tears of repentance; and when thou hast softened this rock within my breast, let those streams gush out abundantly. Deliver me, O Lord, from the snare of the hunter, and give not my soul up a prey to them that seek its ruin, but keep me ever safe and steadfast in the performance of thy will. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God. Give me a right judgment and a perfect understanding of Divine truths, that I may have worthy apprehensions of thy unmeasurable goodness. Direct my prayers to thee on all occasions, and let me ask such things as thou delightest to give, and are best for me to receive. Kindle in my heart a holy zeal. Incline thy mercy effectually to blot out the remembrance of all my past offences committed against thy Divine Majesty. O Lord, hear; O Lord, hearken and do: Defer not for thy own sake, O my God. If thou rejectest my petitions, and turnest away thy face, I die; if thou showest the light of thy countenance, I am renewed to life. If thou regard my righteousness only, this, alas! is no better than filth and pollution, and I shall be in thy account no better than a loathesome carcase. But if thou look upon me in thy mercy, this raises my dead, putrifying body from the grave of sin, and breathes into me again a life of righteousness and hope. Remove far from me whatever is odious and offensive to thy pure eyes, and plant in me a spirit of charity and cleanness, that I may lift up holy hands in prayer, and not bring such a sacrifice as is an abomination to my God. Put away from me all hurtful things, and give me such things

as are profitable for me. O thou blessed Physician of souls, grant me balm for my wounds, and proper medicines to heal my spiritual diseases. Possess my heart with thy fear, with meekness and reverence, grant me unfeigned faith, a clean conscience, and a true charity, a tender regard to the good of my brethren; let me never favour or forget my own miscarriages, nor ever be inquisitive after, or severe upon, the faults or failings of other people.

O be gracious and compassionate to my poor soul, to my frailties and transgressions. Visit me in my weakness, heal my sickness, refresh my languishings, and revive me from spiritual death. O that there were in me a heart that might always fear thee, a soul that might always love thee, an understanding that might rightly apprehend and conceive worthily of thee; ears ever open to hear thee; eyes ever fixed and intent to see thee. Have pity upon me, O my God, have pity upon me; and from the throne of thy majesty on high, cast down a compassionate look; scatter the thick night of ignorance and error, and enlighten my dark soul with the bright beams of thy Holy Spirit. Give me the knowledge of discerning between good and evil; and help me to keep a constant watchful guard over myself, that I may see the things which belong unto my peace, and carefully avoid all those seducements, that would betray me into irrecoverable ruin. Above all, I beg free and full remission of my manifold and grievous sins, of thee, my Lord, who diedst to purchase it; and that, by and through thee, I may find effectual propitiation, and comfort, and mercy, in all time of my tribulation, and anguish of heart, in all my necessities and distresses, but especially in the hour of death, and in the day

of judgment. Finally, O Lord, vouchsafe to bestow on me everlasting life, not for any works which I have done, (let them be pardoned only and that is sufficient, reward they cannot deserve) but for thy manifold and great mercy, upon which I throw myself entirely, as the only refuge and hope of sinners and unprofitable servants.

## MEDITATION XXXI.

*Intercession for others.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, permit, I pray thee, thy unworthy servant to express his charity, by enlarging his petitions, and let them prevail for blessings not only on myself, but others. Grant to all princes and governors, that they may rule thy people in justice and thy fear; and establish the thrones of them that do so, in righteousness and peace. Inspire thy ministers with truth and zeal, that they may agree in a right understanding of thy holy word, and diligently and unanimously prosecute their great work, by setting forth thy glory, and setting forward the salvation of all men. Let thy favour be ever present with thy holy Catholic Church, and every member of it, men and women, ministers and people, all that believe in thee, all that labour in thy love; increase their graces daily, and enable them faithfully to improve and persevere in every good word and work. Assist all thy servants with such kinds and degrees of thy grace, as are suitable to their respective conditions. Inspire all thy people with holiness and truth; may they be devoted to thy service with heavenly-mindedness and purity, and serve thee with fidelity and mutual love. To all repenting sinners grant pardon and consolation; to all widows and orphans, sustenance and relief; to the helpless and oppressed, protection and justice; to all travellers, a safe return home; to all in sorrow and trouble, patience

and comfort; to all who are at sea, their desired port; and to every one tossed on the waves of this troublesome world, the haven of salvation, and the land of everlasting life. Enable those that are strong, to stand; help them that are growing in goodness, to prosper and improve daily more and more; and to all that live in sin, to wretched me in particular, give the grace of speedy recollection, and effectual amendment.

For, O most merciful Jesus, Son of the living God, and Saviour of the world! I acknowledge myself a most unworthy, most miserable sinner; but thou, O Father of mercies, who hast compassion upon all, wilt not suffer me to perish, nor cast me utterly out of thy sight: had that been thy intention, thou wouldst have cut me off in the midst of my wickedness, and not have allowed me space or disposition to repent. Since, therefore, thou art pleased still to forbear punishment, and to grant me thy mercy, give me a heart, as thou hast given me opportunities, to make my peace with thee. Influence my mind powerfully, that I may seek, and desire, and love thee above all things, and fear above all to offend thee, and be careful constantly to please thee.

Lastly, O God, and Father, blessed for ever, I intreat thee for all them who make charitable mention of me in their prayers, and all who have desired to be recommended to thy favour, in those of the least and most unworthy of thy servants: for all who have done me any good offices, or are in any degree related to me, that thou wouldst hear them for me, and me for them; and according to thy bounteous mercy, preserve and govern them, and return all their kindness and charity sevenfold

into their bosom; that thou wouldst impart liberally to all, who are yet engaged in their Christian warfare, the succours of thy grace; and, in thy own good time, to all when they have happily finished their course, the consummation of reward and glory. And, O thou, who art Alpha aad Omega, the beginning and end, once more I repeat that most important request, that, when the time appointed for my great change shall come, thou wilt in mercy stand by me in my last hours; strengthen me in my great conflict, support me in my dying agonies, pluck me out of the jaws of the ravening wolf, who will then stand ready to seize and devour me; defend me from his terrors and accusations, and take me for thy own: so shall I be received into the blessed company of saints and angels, in thy heavenly paradise, there to rejoice, and live, and reign with thee for ever, who art over all, God blessed for ever. Amen, blessed Jesus, Amen.

## MEDITATION XXXII.

*Love to Christ.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, who art made unto me of God, redemption, and mercy, and salvation! I praise thee, I bless thee, I render thanks to thee, but thanks that do by no means bear proportion to the inestimable benefits for which they are due; thanks, wretchedly defective in their zeal and devotion, for mercies which ought to warm this frozen heart of mine upon every remembrance of thee: not such as I am sensible I owe, but yet the best my soul can with its utmost efforts reach up to. Thou hope of my heart, and strength of my soul, let thy power supply what my weakness cannot attain to: thy fervent love make up for my lukewarm affection: for though I have not yet been able to love thee so much as I ought, yet, if sincerity can be accepted instead of perfection, my conscience supports me with this testimony, that I desire, however, and wish with all my soul, that I were able to love thee as much as thou deservest.

O Light shed from above into my soul, from whom no secrets are hid! Thou seest my inward parts, and art conscious to all my desires. If any good be there, it is of thy inspiring: if this of loving thee be (nay, because I am sure it is) good, and from thee, enable me to perform that which thou hast made me to desire, and grant that I may love thee to a degree as exalted as thou requirest. I offer to thee thanks and praises; let not that gift be barren,

and produce no worthy fruit in me which thou hast of thy own free grace communicated; but crown and perfect thine own work: and as thy goodness first excited within me holy desires, moved by no deserts of mine, so, I beseech thee, continue the same grace, in granting those desires their just accomplishment: awaken my stupidity, quicken my deadness, and change my cold indifference into a most sensible and fervent zeal; for this is the aim and end of all my prayers, this is the proper effect of all my reflections upon thee and all thy benefits, that the more I converse with thee, and the oftener I remember thee, the more vehemently I may love thee.

It was thy goodness, O Lord, that created me at first: it was thy mercy, that when I was created, cleansed me from the stain of sin: it was thy power which has preserved me by the sanctification of thy Spirit: it was thy clemency, thy bounty, thy long suffering, which, notwithstanding my numberless actual provocations since, hath forborn, sustained, and waited for my amendment. Thou, Lord, hast long expected the return of thy prodigal child; and I, but not, alas! with equal carefulness, wait for the inspiration of thy grace, to work in me repentance and holiness of life. My God, my Maker, thou that sparest me, thou that sustainest me, I hunger and thirst after thee, I gasp for and pant after thee; and as a darling, but a desolate child debarred of his most indulgent father's presence, weeps and laments incessantly, and thinks of, and longs for nothing but his beloved company, and wears the image of his face perpetually in his heart; so I am moved by the tenderest impressions, and with an eager impatience lament my distance from thee.

I often think upon, and am very sensibly affected, though not so sensibly as I wish and ought to be, with thy sorrows and sufferings, thy buffetings and scourges, thy reproaches and revilings, thy wounds and expiring agonies; how thou wert killed and crucified, how thou wert embalmed and buried, and withal, how gloriously thou didst rise again, and how triumphantly ascended up into heaven; and all this for me, sinful man, and for my salvation. These things I believe with a most steadfast faith; and in virtue of that persuasion I bewail the miseries of my pilgrimage and exile from thee: I propose no other comfort to myself, comparable to that of my Lord's return to me, and do most ardently desire, as the sum and source of all my happiness, to see thy beauteous face for ever in thy glory.

Say, my soul, if thou canst, how thou shouldst have been affected, hadst thou seen this Lord in person; seen the King of angels emptying himself of majesty, and condescending to converse with men, that men might be exalted to live and converse with angels; seen thy offended GOD die, to reconcile vile offenders to himself, and so prevent their everlasting death? O what expressions, what conceptions, what wonder can be great enough for this unparalleled, this amazing love and goodness! But draw a little nearer yet, my soul, and take a more distinct view of this tragical, this astonishing scene. Couldst thou have seen thy dearest Saviour's side pierced with a spear, and would not the same weapon have pierced through thy own heart also? Couldst thou have stood by and beheld the hands and feet of him that created thee torn with nails, and fastened to the cross, and the blood which redeemed thee gushing out in streams, and not have

sunk thyself, and even expired with grief and horror at the sight?

Say then withal, (but that thou canst not say) why thou dost now read, and hear and meditate upon these things, which when seen by the eye of faith, are as certain as if present to that of the body, with so slender impression and concern: why dost not thou drink up the bitter cup of tears, since thy Jesus did for thee drink that of his Father's wrath? Why dost thou not feel a grief too deep to be described, like that of his virgin-mother, when she saw her innocent and only son bound and scourged, tortured and slain before her face; since the relation here too is most close and dear, and, as thy Lord was her's, so art thou the Lord's flesh and bones, a member of that body, whereof he is the head?

Had I, with holy Joseph, taken my Lord down from the cross, wrapped him in spices, and laid him in the sepulchre, how happy should I have really esteemed myself, that any grateful respect of mine had contributed to the honour of his interment! What glad astonishment should I have felt, had I been in company with those zealous women who were affrighted with a vision of angels, and heard that comfortable, that reviving message, Fear not ye; ye seek Jesus which was crucified: he is not here, for he is risen. These, dearest Lord, were moving objects, of which thy providence did not think fit to give me a bodily sight, but I behold them all by a distinct and undoubted faith. I see the pledges and memorials of them now in thy blessed sacraments: and though I was not allowed to kiss thy scars, and drop my tears into the print of the spear and nails, yet, as oft as I approach thy

table with deep remorse and due reverence, I there weep over thy crucified body, there contemplate the pangs of thy bitter death, there rejoice in the triumphs of thy resurrection, there receive the effectual representation of all thou hast done and suffered for me; and, by a holy union with thee and all thy members, attain a greater privilege than any conversation with thee in the days of thy flesh could have conferred. Thou art to all intents the same Saviour; and if they that saw thee were blessed, because they believed, yet thy own mouth declared them no less blessed who have not seen, and yet have believed.

But still the sight of thee, of thy beauties, and thy glory, is the constant desire, the only end, and noble reward of our faith; and in this clouded disconsolate interval, till that can be obtained, my soul finds itself frequently at a loss how to express itself, what to do, whither to bend its course, or where to find its much-loved Lord. My joy is turned into heaviness, and my laughter into mourning, for want of his dear presence. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. My soul refuseth comfort from any other hand but thine, my joy and treasure; for, whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Thou hast commanded me to seek thy face, and my heart most readily replies, Thy face, Lord, will I seek; O turn not thou thy face from me, nor cast away thy servant in displeasure.

O most affectionate lover of souls, the poor committeth himself unto thee, and thou art the helper of the fatherless. O my most faithful guardian, preserve and pity me; I am an orphan destitute of

friends, and my soul is in a state of poverty and widowhood. Look upon the tears I shed for thy absence in this desolate condition; and come, Lord Jesus, come unto me quickly, that I may be comforted; show me thy face, and I shall be satisfied: discover thy glory, and my joy shall be full: my flesh and my soul thirst and pant for thee, the living God, the fountain of life, O when shall I come and appear before God?

When will my comforter, whom I so earnestly look for, make his approaches to me? When, O when shall I feel the joy I so passionately desire, and be filled with the pleasures of that glorious dwelling, which I hope to reach at the end of this wearisome journey of life? Lord, if I may not yet drink of the river of thy pleasures, let me at least drink of the brook in the way. Let my tears be my meat and drink day and night, till the dawn of that glorious morning, when my soul should be awakened with that most welcome call, Behold thy spouse, thy Lord, the marriage of the Lamb is come. All I presume to ask at present, is refreshment and support under my sorrows: and, that these may be such as will one day be turned into joy; for I know my Redeemer will come, because he is merciful and true; nor will he suspend my happiness by unnecessary delay, because he loves those that love him, and they that seek him early shall be sure to find him. To whom, therefore, be glory and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

## MEDITATION XXXIII.

*Love, the Way to Life.*

By what means we may avoid the torments of hell, and attain the joys of heaven, is an inquiry which deserves our most attentive application of thought; a science to be learnt at the expense of our most watchful care, and most solicitous concern. And in this study, it is of great consequence to set out right; for all our most assiduous endeavours will be employed to very little purpose, if we be not first instructed what way it is, that leads to everlasting bliss, and carries us out from all danger of everlasting misery. It will therefore behove us very diligently to consider those words of the Apostle, in 1 Cor. ii. 9. which, taken in their just latitude, do plainly teach us these two things: first, that the glories of the blessed, in a future state, are greater than can be expressed; and then, secondly, what is the way, by which we must arrive at this blessedness. Eye, he says, hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Now when he tells us that these excellent things are prepared for them that love God, from thence the inference is natural and plain, that love is the way enjoined, in which they are to be obtained. But then the Scripture makes it no less evident, that the love of God, and the love of our neighbour, are virtues inseparable from each other. For thus much is the

importance of that passage in St. John, He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. In these two parts it seems that true charity consists, to which St. Paul hath given so glorious a character, when he shuts up his discourse of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit with those remarkable words, And yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Charity then is not only the way, but the best, nay, the only way, that leads to our heavenly country; for it is impossible for any man ever to come thither by any other way. But who is it that knows, or walks in this way? Even he that loves God and his brother. It will concern us then to be perfectly well informed what are the proper expressions of our love to each, and the just measures of our affection to God and to our neighbour. And of this point it may suffice to say, that we are bound in duty to love God more than ourselves, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Now we love God more than ourselves, when upon all occasions we prefer his will before our own, and suffer no private interest or sensual inclination to come in competition with his commands, and his honour. But it is very observable, that although we are enjoined to love our neighbour as ourselves, yet we are no where enjoined to love him as much as we do ourselves; and therefore our duty in this respect is satisfied, when we heartily wish and endeavour all that good to our neighbour, which we ought to wish and endeavour the attainment of ourselves, especially the everlasting happiness of the soul; when we contribute to his obtaining it, and

omit no instance, whereby our help may be of any use to him, in procuring any advantage, whether temporal or spiritual, so far as the present circumstances of affairs render our assistance seasonable, and our own condition puts it in our power to become serviceable to him. This explication agrees exactly with the equity of our Lord's rule, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them. And it shows us likewise the necessity of that other left us by St. John, Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. But it may be asked once more, who those neighbours are whom we are bound to love after this manner? And to this the answer is very short, that the command is of unlimited extent, and comprehends all mankind; whether they be Christians, Jews, or infidels; whether they be acquaintances or strangers; whether they be friends or enemies.

## MEDITATION XXXIV.

*Reasons for Love to God.*

But because this duty is of such infinite consequence, and the whole of our hopes and happiness depend upon the due performance of it, it is very necessary that we consider diligently what are the grounds of this obligation, and by what means it may be discharged. Now nothing will conduce to the begetting, cherishing, and heightening in our minds a holy love towards God, so much as a frequent recollection and just estimate of his wonderful goodness, and innumerable benefits to us: for indeed, the blessings he gives us of his own mere motion are so many and so great, and the recompense he makes us in return for any services we pay him, is so exceeding disproportionate to what we have reason to expect, that our souls must of necessity be at a loss, and perfectly confounded with amazement at the number and the value of the favours we receive at his hands. But though these are so inestimably great, that it is impossible for us to make such a return of love and thanks and obedience as they deserve, yet sure it is, we are bound to make the best we can, and by our diligence to pay to the utmost of our ability, remembering that the vast arrear behind, stands still charged to account, not from any want of will, but merely from the want of power to clear so great a debt. And thus, my soul, thou hast an answer to the first inquiry propounded, which was concerning

the reason of this duty. For therefore is our Lord to be most affectionately loved by us, because he is so wonderfully compassionate and tender, so kind and bountiful, and poureth out his benefits upon us in such abundance: and all this not from any manner of desert or worth in us, that might engage his favour, but of his own good will and mere motion; of which we are able to render no other reason, but only this, that he will have mercy, because he delights in, and will have mercy.

The other inquiry how this God is to be loved, that command which enjoins the duty makes sufficiently plain. And how strict an observance of this command is required from us, we may easily infer, from the terms in which it is expressed, and the solemnity used in laying it upon us. Hear then, O man, the first and great commandment; hearken to it attentively, remember it exactly, meditate upon it incessantly, and use thy very utmost efforts to fulfil it without delay, without intermission, without end, or ever supposing thou hast done so much, that thou art at liberty to desist from any fresh instances of thy regard to it. All this is implied in that awakening preface, by which God introduces it: Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord. Now the command itself runs thus, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. Which is as much as to say, that our intellectual faculties, the understanding, the will, and the memory, should all be fixed on this, as on their best and proper object; that God should be the subject of our study; that he should preside over all our inclinations, be the ultimate end of all our desires, dwell always pre-

sent in our thoughts, and reign supreme, as the governing principle of all our actions. In a word, that we should contemplate, and choose, and remember, and reverence him above all, and make it our business to live to him alone.

How men come so easily to satisfy themselves with being so extremely negligent in this most necessary branch of their obedience, is very difficult to conceive; except it be from hence, that wanting a due sense of the greatness of God's love, they proportion their regard to him according to their own scanty notions of his goodness toward them. And therefore, for prevention of this fault in thee, do thou, my soul, attend with reverence, and thankfully recollect the innumerable benefits which he hath bestowed upon thee; the many precious promises he hath made thee: and then I doubt not but what thou hast already, and what thou art warranted to hope for hereafter, will sufficiently convince thee, that thou art under the highest obligations to love God with a most fervent and entire affection. Now, in order to exercise and increase this love the more effectually, begin thy considerations where God began the expressions of his goodness, and think seriously with thyself, by whom, upon what motive, and to what purpose, man was created, and what things God was pleased to create besides, for the sake and service of men.

First then, we must understand, that there is but one cause which produced all created beings, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth, whether they be visible or invisible. That this sole, this universal cause, was no other than the goodness of their Creator, who is the one true God; whose essential goodness is so large, and so

communicative, that he was pleased to make others partakers of that blessedness, which he enjoys from and to all eternity, and which he saw capable of being imparted, without any possibility of suffering diminution by being thus diffused. That good, therefore, which is his very nature, and wherein his own happiness consists, he did thus show abroad not by necessity but free choice, because it is the property of the Supreme Good to will the good of others, and the excellence of Supreme Power to exert itself, not to the prejudice, but the benefit of all that are subject to it. Now, because this blessedness of God cannot be any otherwise partaken of, but by being understood: and the more perfectly it is understood, the more plentifully it is imparted; God was pleased to make rational creatures, and to give to such, a capacity of understanding the Supreme Good, of having what they thus understood, of possessing this best object of their love, and of enjoying what they so possessed. This rational part of the creation is so ordered, that part of it retains its essential purity, without being united to any bodily substance; and such are the angels; another part there is joined to the body, and such is the soul of man. Rational creatures then, are either incorporeal or corporeal: the incorporeal are angels, for these are simple spirits. The corporeal are men, so called, because the human nature consists not only of a reasonable soul, but also of a fleshy body. So then, that the rational creature had any, and that it had particularly this kind of existence, is to be imputed wholly to the goodness of Almighty God, as its original impulsive cause. Men and angels, both were created by the goodness of God; for we therefore are at all,

because God is good, and the whole of that being we receive from God, is good. But to what purpose were these rational creatures made? Surely to praise God, and to love him, and to enjoy him; in all which, not the Creator's but the creature's advantage is consulted; for God is absolutely perfect and happy in himself, and cannot receive either addition or diminution from any of the works of his own hands. The only uses then that can be served by making such creatures as these, and the only account that can be given why they were made at all, must be the manifestation of the Creator's goodness, and the promoting of the creature's happiness. When therefore the question is asked, why, or to what end, rational creatures were made? the true answer undoubtedly is this, that they were made because God was good, and to the intent they might be happy; for, what can conduce to their happiness so much as to serve him, and to enjoy him?

## MEDITATION XXXV.

*All Things made for Man.*

When God is said to have made angels or men for himself, we must not so mistake this expression, as fondly to imagine, that he who made both had any need of either; or, that the acknowledgments and services, which he gave them a capacity of paying, are any addition to the fulness of his bliss and glory. For, how unworthily should we conceive of our Creator's majesty, by thinking that any thing which we call ours, or is most valuable in us, could increase or take away from his blessedness? No, he made us to serve him, but it was because his service is freedom, is an honour; and to be such subjects is to be truly kings. This service redounds wholly to the profit of him that pays it, but not at all to his, to whom it is paid. And, as God made man for himself, so did he likewise make the world for man; that is, so as to minister to man's use and comfort. Man then is placed in a middle and subordinate station, so as to be under authority himself, yet to have servants under him too: and thus all things are most admirably contrived to our advantage, when both the homage we pay, and that which is paid to us, flows into one common channel, and all unites at last in our advantage, as in its proper centre. God will be served by man, for this reason, that not he, but man may reap the benefit of that service: again, God will have man served by the world, that by this service also man

may be the gainer. So that we may with due reverence say, that the whole design of the creation, and every part of it, may be at last reduced to the happiness of man; since both that which was made for him, and that for which himself was made, do mutually conspire to make him happy. Thus all things, as the Apostle says, are ours: whether they be things above us, or upon a level with us, or below us. The things above us are for our enjoyment, and such is God. Those on the level with us are for our society, and such are angels, whom I presume to call our equals, not only with regard to the same rational nature, but chiefly in prospect of our future state: for we are assured, that however they are now in several respects superior to us, yet in the next world the children of the resurrection shall be as they are, and shall live with them for ever in heaven. The things below us are likewise ours; for we have the use and convenience of them, as the masters' goods are, in a true but qualified sense, said to be their servants'. Not that this gives them a property exclusive of their masters', but extends the benefit and the privilege of using them. Nay, even the angels, in some passages of Scripture, are said to do us service; nor did the Apostle think it any disparagement to their character and dignity, when he called them all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. A very great honour this, but such as we ought not to make any difficulty of believing to be done to us, when we reflect upon that so much more astonishing condescension of the Creator, and King of angels, who describes the end of his coming into the world in those very humble terms, that he

came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. They attend upon his pleasure in reference to us, execute his orders, and what they know God has decreed, are sometimes instruments of accomplishing, and sometimes messengers too to give the parties concerned notice of. So that a principle of marvellous love invites the holy angels from their mansions of bliss in heaven, that they may suggest good counsel in our difficulties, that they may visit and comfort us in our distresses and suffering, and that they may succour us in our conflicts and dangers. All which good offices they perform with the greatest cheerfulness and vigilance imaginable; upon God's, upon ours, and upon their own account. Upon God's, because they love and admire that manifestation of his excellences, which appear in our renewed nature; and upon their own, because they hope and wish to see their numbers recruited by the spirits of just men made perfect, and received into the place of the fallen angels.

## MEDITATION XXXVI.

*The Love of God to us.*

It is necessary that every man should take a distinct view of himself, and when he is arrived at a due understanding of the honourable post in which God hath placed him, that he be careful not to dishonour himself, nor injure his Maker, by settling his affection upon things that are below, or unworthy of his character. For objects, which, considered singly and separately, may appear beautiful and lovely, do yet deservedly sink in esteem, when compared with others confessedly more excellent. It argues great folly to put things manifestly deformed and vile, upon the level with such as are amiable and handsome; and is it a point of wisdom to raise those which have a noble and real excellence, and neither depending upon mere fancy nor of the meanest rank of beauties, to an equal degree with the highest and most eminently good? Consider then, my soul, what excellences thou art endued with, and from hence take thy measures, what excellences those are that deserve thy love. Now, if through negligence, or long disuse of the most exalted objects, thy eyes are so far blinded, that thou canst not entertain such lofty ideas of thy own condition, as the case requires; yet thus far at least conquer thy own prejudices, as to learn to make a just estimate of thyself, by the judgment which another hath made of thee. And for this thou

canst not want opportunity, because the matter is so plain, as to give thee sufficient direction. Thou hast a lord and spouse, but how exquisitely beautiful, as yet thou dost not perfectly know, because thou hast not seen his face. He sees and knows thee thoroughly: for had he not done so, he would not love thee. He hath not thought fit hitherto to present himself to thee, but he hath made thee many noble presents; and given such pledges of his kindness, as might at once be both assurances and signs, who it is that hath betrothed thee to himself, and how exceeding tender that affection is, which moved him to this union. Couldst thou behold his charms, there could be no longer ground of doubt. For thou wouldst be convinced, that one so fair, one of such matchless excellence, deserved the entire devotion of thy affections and powers. But in the mean while, how dost thou behave thyself upon this occasion? See him face to face thou canst not, because he is absent; and is this a sufficient reason for not paying him reverence, for insolently and shamelessly affronting him, for slighting that love which thou canst not but see, by voluntarily yielding thyself to the lust of seducing strangers? O do not treat him after this contemptuous manner! If thou canst not as yet know all the charms of thy lover, yet thou canst understand the valuable instances of his love. These are already actually in thy possession; and if considered as they ought, will plainly show thee, what returns of love it becomes thee to make, and how extremely solicitous thou oughtest to be, not to displease, not to despise, not to lose him or his favour. The pledge he hath given thee is most extraordinary: a noble gift suited to the majesty of the Giver. And, as it was be-

low so great a person to bestow a thing of little value; so were it no less unbecoming so wise a person to throw away things of the highest value, upon one in whom there was little or nothing valuable. Great therefore is the present he hath made, but greater still in his esteem is that which he loves in thee, and which induced him to give it.

But thou perhaps wilt ask, my soul, what this great gift is, which thy Lord hath showed himself so very bountiful in bestowing upon thee. Look round this universe, view every part of it, and tell me if thou canst there discover any thing which does not some way or other do thee service. Is not this the end to which every creature seems to have been designed? And does not the whole course of nature plainly promote it? The gratifying thy desires, the bringing in thy profit, the supply of thy wants, the furnishing store for thy comfort and delights, the doing all this in great abundance, and consulting not barely thy necessities, but even thy ease and pleasure. For this, the heavens, the earth, the air, the sea, and all the inhabitants and products of each of them, are with a continual and most officious diligence employed. The regular revolutions of time, the various seasons of the year, the stated successions of night and day, by which the world dies and revives, grows old and young again; its fabric ruined and repaired, its provisions consumed and recruited; all is contrived so admirably for thy purpose, that, as none of these vicissitudes are useless, so one cannot conceive how any of them could be spared without some manifest, some insupportable inconvenience. Of this I suppose thee sensible; but art thou not sensible at the

same time who it is that framed and contrived this wonderful order, and disposed every part so advantageously, that whatever discord appears between each other, yet all are unanimous in promoting the common design; and conspire to do thee service? How brutish is it to feed upon the benefit, and remain ignorant of thy Benefactor. The gift is evident, and is the Giver a secret? Nay, thy own reason will not allow thee so vain an imagination, as, that these advantages are upon any account thy due, or of thy own procuring, but loudly tells thee thou owest them all to the liberality of another. Now be that who it will, to whose bounty thou art so largely indebted, it is plain he hath given us much; and no less plain, that he, who gave so much, would not have done it, had he not loved much. So the greatness of his affection, and the indispensable obligation to ours in return, are both of them demonstrable from the quality of his gift. Now how extravagantly foolish is it not to desire the true love of one, who hath it in his power to be so excellent a friend! Not to do it of our own accord, and in regard to our interest, though there were no antecedent obligation! But how impious, how perverse, how base, not to love him in return, who hath been so inexpressibly kind to us! If then thou lovest other things besides, do it with such limitations as are proper; maintain thy character, and remember theirs; love them as things below thee; as those that were made to do thee service, as tokens of thy Saviour's love, the gift of a friend, the bounty of a master; but be sure never to forget whose goodness all these blessings are owing to, and therefore be not fond of them, for their own

sake: but for his sake who bestowed them: nor let them divide thy affections with the donor, for to take them into thy heart together with him, is a wrong and great indignity; and therefore they must be loved for him, but he by and for them, and infinitely above them all.

## MEDITATION XXXVII.

*The Enjoyment of God's Mercies.*

Take heed, my soul, that thou incur not the reproach of a harlot, by acting like those who have no principle but profit, and value the price of the gift much more than the affection of the giver. Thou canst not be guilty of a more infamous, of a more injurious affront, than to accept and live upon thy Creator's presents, and not to return his love. Consider well the value of what thou hast received; or, if thou art not, as indeed thou art not able, truly to estimate the greatness of his bounty, consider however the advantage of loving him in return. Love him for his own sake; love thyself for his sake; love him that thou mayest enjoy and be happy in him; love thyself that he may love thee. Love him in the good things he hath bestowed upon thee, love him for thy own sake, and thyself for his sake. This is pure and chaste love, debased with no sordid interest, embittered with no torment, but delightful and generous, firm and lasting. Think, and recollect diligently, my soul, the mercies which thou hast received in common with all mankind; the special marks of favour, of which all are not allowed to partake; others, which are peculiar to thyself alone. He hath loved thee in common with all thy fellow-creatures; he hath distinguished thee from many of them by singular blessings; he hath showed the same affection to thee with all good men; he hath preferred thee before all evil men;

and if the being preferred before the evil seem a small thing, reflect farther, how very many good men there are, whose blessings yet are come far short of thine.

First then, my soul, remember that there was a time that thou wert not at all; and, that thou ever didst begin to be, is the free gift of God. Thy very being then is an instance of his bounty. But was it possible, that before thou hadst a being, thou shouldst give any thing to God, which could oblige him to give thee that being, by way of recompense for any former kindness on thy part. No certainly, it is manifest thou didst not, couldst not deserve any thing at his hands, while thou thyself as yet wert not any thing. Had then his liberality stopped there, and given thee being only; yet this single blessing is great enough to challenge thy continual praise and love. But he hath given thee a great deal more than bare existence; by making thee a beautiful and glorious creature. Nor did the munificence of this noble benefactor content itself with an inferior degree of beauty, for he hath wrought thee up to the highest perfection, and formed thee into a resemblance of his own Divine excellences. Thus hath he drawn those hearts to him by a likeness of nature, which he had attracted by the engagements of his love. He gave us being, beauty, and life: that by existence we might excel those things that are not; by our form, those that are rude, unfinished, or deformed; and by our life, those things that are inanimate. How deeply then art thou indebted, O my soul, to him, from whom thou hast received much, when yet thou hadst nothing of thy own, and having nothing of thy own, hast nothing in thy power to make a re-

quital with, but only to love him, who gave thee all thou hast! For in recompense of that which was given thee, out of pure love, thou canst not make any less, thou canst not make any greater return, than that of loving again. And evident it is, that there could not be any other inducement for bestowing all these benefits, but the free love of God alone.

But now I will open another and more amazing scene of kindness, by showing thee, how low this Lord of thine, whose majesty shone so gloriously bright in thy creation, was pleased to condescend in the work of thy new creation. In the former he appeared so high and noble, in the latter so little and so humble, that it is not easy to determine, whether of these two extremes is a more worthy subject of thy wonder and praise. In the former his power was illustrious, who conferred such glorious privileges upon thee; in the latter, his mercy was no less illustrious, who submitted to endure such bitter things for thee: that he might raise thee up from the depth of misery, into which thou hadst sunk thyself, himself vouchsafed to descend into the same pit, where thou layedst grovelling and unable to help thyself: and the misery which thou didst then sustain, he was content in pity to undergo, that a way might be made for justice to be satisfied with the restitution of the happiness thou hadst lost. He came down, he took upon himself, he endured, he vanquished, he restored. He came down from the throne of God to wretched mortals; he took upon himself mortality; he endured affliction, and pain, and ignominy; he vanquished death; he restored mankind. Stand still, my soul, and with holy astonishment gaze on this series of won-

ders, this inestimable complication of mercies; consider the greatness of his love, who did not grudge to do so much for thee. He made thee beautiful at first, but thou didst sully and deform thyself by sin. Notwithstanding this dishonour done to the charms thou hadst received from him, thy stains are washed away, and the purity of thy former complexion renewed again, by his marvellous compassion. Thus was his love the sole cause, both of the gift at first, and of its restitution. When thou hadst no being, his love created thee: when thou hadst defaced his glorious image, his love refreshed the impression: and to demonstrate how exceedingly he loved thee, he willingly delivered thee from death, when that could be done at no less expense, than the laying down his own life. He would not do it at a cheaper rate, that so the price might demonstrate the vehemence of his affection, no less than the value of the advantages purchased with it. A mighty favour no doubt it was, that the first man received from his merciful Creator, when the breath of life was breathed into him, and he became a living soul, like the God who made him. But how much greater was the condescension, how much more valuable the blessing, when for the man that he had made, God afterwards gave himself? I acknowledge it a great thing, that I am God's handy-work, and own the gratitude due upon this account; but sure a great deal more is due, when I consider, that God was pleased to make himself my ransom. For thus there is so much expended upon our redemption, as might almost incline us to believe, that man is a valuable consideration for even God himself. O how strangely hath light sprung out of darkness! How happy an

event was my guilt attended with, for the purging whereof, while this love of my Saviour disposes him to it, that love is opened to my view and desires, and if I do but give him my heart, I am secure of an easy access to, and a sure place in his. Had my misery and danger been less, I never could have had so noble a proof of his kindness. Have I not reason then in some respect to bless that fall, from which I rise with greater advantage, than if I had not fallen at all? No kindness could be greater, none more sincere, more chaste, more fervent, more passionately expressed, than that of an innocent person, dying for me, who had no recommendation to deserve, none to engage his love. What was it then, my dearest Lord, that thou didst love in me? What that thou lovedst so much, as even to die for me? What couldst thou find in this poor wretched creature, worth doing so many miracles of goodness, worth suffering so many injuries and agonies for? I am perfectly amazed at this stupendous dispensation; and, the more I consider either thee or myself, the less I find myself able to account for it.

## MEDITATION XXXVIII.

*The Privileges of the Gospel.*

The merit and sufficiency of this redemption extend to all mankind, but the means ordinarily necessary to render it effectual are not distributed with an even hand. Here then, my soul, observe and be thankful for a discrimination manifestly in thy favour. For how numerous, and of what condition, if compared to thee, are those many, who have not the precious opportunities of that grace which are allowed to thee? Thou canst not but have heard how many generations of men, from the beginning of the world down to this very day, have lived and died without the knowledge of the true God; how many more did formerly, how many even now perish eternally, and never heard one syllable of a redemption purchased by the blood of the Son of God. Above all these, thy Saviour hath distinguished thee, and signalized his love in granting those means of grace, of which none of them were permitted to partake. They were left in their ignorance, and thou art taken to be made wise unto salvation. But for this difference there can be but one reason assigned, which is the same so often inculcated already, thy blessed Master's love. Thy God, thy Redeemer, chose thee rather than them. He chose thee among all. He singled thee from the rest. He hath given thee all possible demonstrations of his kindness. He hath called thee by his own name, that this mark

and memorial might rest perpetually upon thee, that thou mightest never forget to whom thou belongest; he hath not given thee an empty name, but all the advantages imported by, and accruing from it; he hath anointed thee with the same oil of gladness, with which himself was anointed, that thou mightest be the anointed of the anointed, and from Christ, denominated in the most beneficial sense, a Christian.

But whence is this to the servant of thy Lord; didst thou excel in strength, in wisdom, or noble descent, in riches, or virtue, or any other qualification, which might entitle thee to this special favour, from which so many others are excluded? How many strong, how many wise, how many noble, how many rich men have there been, who yet have all been passed over and rejected. This therefore is another enhancement of his favour to thee, that they, notwithstanding all their pompous pretensions, were not admitted to the like privileges with thee, who hadst them not to allege in thy behalf. Thou wert miserable and deformed, naked and poor, dissolute and sinful, an object of abhorrence and detestation, yet did not thy God disdain thee; but even in these wretched, these forbidding circumstances, extended to thee the riches of this marvellous compassion and grace. And now, my soul, that thou hast seen thy happiness, see also what thy duty is resulting from the sense of it. For be assured, that notwithstanding all these kind advances, if thou do not make it thy constant care and most earnest endeavour to deck and adorn thyself as becomes thee, thou shalt not be admitted into the embraces of thy heavenly spouse. Set then about this necessary work, while thou hast time;

for now is the proper season of dressing thyself for the marriage. Abate thy too solicitous concern for the outward appearance of thy body, and employ all thy pains upon thy inward man; set off thy face in the best manner; let thy habit be clean and comely, thy spots washed off, thy complexion clear, thy decays and blemishes refreshed, thy air modest and graceful, thy deportment orderly; and let it be thy chief, thy only business, so to prepare and fit thyself for thy Lord's approach, that the figure thou makest may be suitable to thy character, and become the chastity, the majesty of one who hath the honour of being a bride to an immortal husband, a heavenly king.

## MEDITATION XXXIX.

*The Communications of Divine Grace.*

Nor let thy poverty discourage thee, O my soul, as if I now advised to an impossible undertaking; for this is yet a farther instance of thy Lord's love, that he furnishes thee with the ornaments in which he likes to see thee, and such as could not be procured any where else, did not his bounty supply thee with them. By him alone it is, that thou art clothed with the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation, and put into a condition of honouring him with good works, and acceptable instances of piety and devotion. All these communications of his grace, like garments of the richest materials and most delightful colours, make up the dress, and set off the beauties of a heavenly soul. Whatever is necessary for thy health, whatever for thy refreshment and delight, whatever can restore lost beauty, or add to the gracefulness of that which thou already hast, thou needst not want; for he hath plenty of all, and distributes his stores liberally. See now what a noble provision is made for thee, and how abundant care hath been taken for the relief of all thy necessities. At first thou wert possessed of nothing, and he imparted to thee what was fitting: this gift through thy default was lost, and he restored it to thee: thus art thou never forsaken in any of thy distresses; to convince thee how generous, how boundless an affection thy lover bears to thee. He will not lose thee; and

therefore he waits with great patience for thy better resolutions, and in much pity grants thee frequent opportunities of recovering again and again those precious advantages, which through thy own carelessness have been often forfeited and gone. So that in all this matter, this remarkable difference deserves to be thankfully considered, that all the damage thou sustainest is entirely from thyself, but all the recoveries from it are entirely from Him. And O! how many are there, who once received the same advantages with thee; but though equally favoured in the gift at first, yet were denied the privilege of having them restored when lost, which thou hast had so very often repeated, by the peculiar mercies of thy gracious God; the grace of doing well is never denied thee, when thou art as ready to receive and improve, as he constantly is to give it. And if thou become an instrument of great good, it is his mercy that exalts thee to this high pitch of virtue: but if thou find great difficulties, and canst not attain to the perfection thou labourest after, and eagerly desirest, yet this should be esteemed an effect of mercy too. For he knows best what is convenient for thee, and will make a more advantageous choice than thou canst for thyself. And therefore the way alway to think well and worthily of God, is to be thoroughly persuaded that whatever he does with thee and thy affairs, is wise and good. For such is the love of God towards us, that there is not any one trial, under which human nature labours, not any one infirmity, to which it is subject, not any event that befalls any one of us; but he in his infinite goodness, and so far as we do not obstruct his gracious intentions of kindness, disposes it to our advantage. It

may be, thou hast not the grace of an eminent and steady virtue; but, while the storms of temptation shake thee, that inconvenience is compensated, by thy humility taking deeper root. And humility with an allay of frailties and failings, is more acceptable to Almighty God, than virtuous actions puffed up with vain-glory, and spiritual pride. When therefore thou observest any dispensation of Providence, do not presume to think that some other method, or event, would have been better; but fear his majesty, reverence his wisdom, and make thy prayers to him, with a mind entirely resigned to his will. Implore his protection and assistance, in such measures of grace, as he knows fittest for thee; that if there be any remains of evil in thee, his mercy would take them clear away; that, whatever good inclinations or beginnings he sees in thee, he would promote and bring them to due perfection; and, in a word, that he would at last bring thee to himself, by such a way as he shall find most agreeable to his own wise purposes. For so thou do but attain the end, about the means thou needest not be very solicitous. That is the proper object of thy desires; but when thou extendest thy desires to these too, they then exceed their just bounds, and if too anxious, take upon them to prescribe to Providence, in things which God hath reserved to his own free disposal.

And now, my soul, I must ask thee again and again, What shall we render to the Lord our God, for the innumerable benefits he hath done unto us? Of which, that thou mayest take another prospect, consider, that he does not only give us cause to thank him for the same good things which he bestows upon others, but makes the very evils that

befall us, evidences of his exceeding great love, that we in like manner might be moved to love him exceedingly, whether we reflect upon the good we enjoy, or the evil we endure. Thou, Lord, hast had compassion on my ignorance and blindness; and by my misery magnified thy mercy, in bringing me to the knowledge of thee and thy truth: and granted me a clearer understanding in the dark and difficult passages of thy revealed will, than many others have arrived at. Some of my equals in years and natural abilities, thou sufferest still to continue in ignorance and error, but my eyes hast thou enlightened with thy grace, and thereby made me wiser than the aged. Thou hast endued me with strong faculties, a large capacity, a quick apprehension, a faithful memory. Thou givest success to my undertakings, improvement by my studies, comfort in my adversity, protection in my prosperity; which way soever I go, thy grace prevents and follows me; and many times, when I have given myself for lost, thou hast by some sudden and surprising turn of mercy delivered me from my calamities and my fears. When I went wrong, thou hast brought me back, and guided me in the right way; when I offended, thou hast reproved and chastened me; when I was in heaviness, thou hast supported my spirits; when I fell, thou hast set me up again; when I stood, thou upheldest me: thou didst enable me to know thee more truly, to believe in thee more steadfastly, to love thee more vehemently, to follow thee more eagerly. And now, O Lord my God, the joy of my life, the light of my eyes, what requital shall I make thee for all thy inestimable mercies? Thou commandest me to love thee, but how can I ever

love thee enough? Nay, who am I indeed that thou shouldst desire or accept of my love? for thou, Lord, art my strength and my castle, my deliverer and my refuge, my helper and protector, the horn of my salvation, my support, my all; and, in a word, for that comprehends the whole of what I can say or think, thou, O Lord, art my GOD; and whatever I have, or can do, or am, is of thee, and in thee, and by thee.

## MEDITATION XL.

*God's tender care.*

Still, O my God, I must repeat my grateful acknowledgment, that the blessings I have received from thee are great beyond measure, and many beyond number; and in talking of these, shall be my most delightful entertainment. Lord, I beseech thee, grant me a mind truly thankful, that my mouth may be ever full of thy praise, and my heart overflow with thy love, for thy infinite goodness to me. Thou seest, my soul, what noble pledges thou hast, and these pledges sufficiently declare the affection of that Lord who gave them. Take care then to preserve thy love and fidelity entire. Let no impure desires, no adulterous lust, pollute or divide thy affection; but keep thee only unto him to the last moment of thy life. If thou wert formerly an harlot, yet now thy virgin innocence is restored. For such is the excellence of his wonderful love, that it restores purity to them that had lost it, and preserves it unblemished to them who are careful to retain it. Let then the greatness of his mercy never slip out of thy mind, but consider how tenderly he loves thee, who never was wanting to thee in any demonstration of his kindness which thy condition required. I cannot but confess, when I reflect upon the constant presence, and the abundance of his mercies towards me, that I am almost tempted to say, that my salvation is his only business and care. For sure he could not be more tender of my

safety, more ready to relieve all my distresses, to comfort all my sorrows, to supply all my wants, to guard me in all my dangers, could he be supposed to overlook the exigences of all his other creatures, and confine his good providence to me alone; so watchful does he show himself over all my affairs, so ever present to, nay, ever preventing my earliest wishes. Wheresoever I go, he forsakes me not; wheresoever I am, he stands by me; whatsoever I do, he strengthens and succours me; he is a constant observer of all my behaviour; and such is his goodness, that whatever commendable attempts I make, he works together with me in them, and by the success which I attain gradually, shows me that he condescends to work, not according to the efficacy of his own almighty power, but in proportion to my weak capacity. These instances make it indisputably clear, that though the imperfection of our present state will not allow us to see his face, yet we cannot be so stupidly blind, as not to be sensible of his presence. A presence, which can no more be concealed, than it can be avoided.

But while my thoughts are engaged upon this subject, I feel a new and unusual pleasure, that makes such strong, such delightful impressions, as seem to transport and carry me out of myself. Methinks I am in an instant changed, and become quite another creature, and joys come flowing in upon me, more exquisite than I am able to express. My conscience is all over satisfaction; the anguish of my past sufferings is quite swallowed up, and not so much as a troublesome remembrance of them left behind. My mind is enlarged, my understanding clear and bright, my heart and its affections enlightened and purified; all my desires filled with

pleasure, and my soul is perfect rapture and triumph. I am no longer here, methinks, but translated; I know not how, nor whither, to some unknown region of bliss: I embrace, as it were, with a most ardent love, some dear object with which I am not yet perfectly acquainted: I hold him fast, and strive all I can, never to part with him more; but still it is with a sort of delightful difficulty, that I struggle not to let that break from me, which of all things I wish to keep for ever in my arms. For in him my soul seems to have found the complement and end of all her desires. This thought creates that eager and inexpressible transport of joy; that she seeks nothing, covets nothing beyond it; but would esteem her happiness complete, could she continue always to be as now she is. What can this heavenly object be, that pours in such rapturous and uncorrupted pleasure? Is it my Beloved? Undoubtedly it can be none but he. It is thus my Lord vouchsafes to visit me. He comes in secret, not to be seen, not to be discerned by any of my senses. He comes to touch me, but not to show me his face. He comes to put me in mind of him, but not to let me perfectly understand him. He comes to me to give me a taste of his sweetness, but not to give me his whole self; to gratify my desires, but not to bestow upon me the fulness of his excellences. However, this is what my condition will admit, what I ought to receive with all the thanks and gladness possible: for it is an assured foretaste of heaven, an inviolable earnest and token of his betrothing me to himself. And blessed, ever blessed be thy mercy, for these assurances, these comfortable foretastes of future happiness: thou, Lord, art good and gracious, and canst not worthily be praised,

for those supporting consolations, whereby thou, who hast promised that my soul shall have a distinct view and full possession of thee hereafter, dost convince her, how sweet that enjoyment, and how precious the promises of it are, by condescending to give her a taste of thee here.

How fervently then oughtest thou, my soul, to love this good God, who hath been so exceeding kind to thee! Nor am I yet, or ever should I be at an end, did I undertake to recount all his benefits. But, to keep close to what thou canst not sure but feel, and see daily and hourly, it shall be next my endeavour to kindle and fan this Divine flame, by putting thee in mind of such as thou carriest about with thee, and art thyself a living monument of. Consider then, what praise, what thanks, what devout zeal are due to Him, who breathed into me the breath of life, brought me to just maturity for birth, and put a difference between me and those, which, perishing by untimely abortions, or strangled at the gate of the womb, seem to have been conceived for death rather than life. It is of his mercy alone, that I am; it is a yet more valuable effect of the same mercy that I am a man; that I was endued with an understanding spirit, which makes a very advantageous distinction between me and brutes. To the same mercy I owe the comely form of this body, and the perfect use of those several organs of sense, so commodiously placed in it. Hence I have eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, nostrils for smelling, hands for handling, a palate for tasting, feet for walking; and, which crowns all the rest, a healthful constitution for my unspeakable ease and comfort. And is not this another most wonderful instance of goodness, that God hath made

such plentiful provision for the service, the entertainment, the delight of the senses; and suited objects so to the organs, that each is proportioned to the use and convenience of that sense, which it was designed to gratify and minister unto? That there are many bright bodies, many delightful sounds, many sweet smells, many grateful relishes, many things that pleasingly affect the touch. For this, no doubt, the good providence of God had in view, when he infused such different qualities into the bodies created by him, that there should be no sense of man, which from thence might not find a delight peculiar to it. And thus, we see, that sight is qualified to perceive one sort of objects; hearing, another; tasting, another; and the touch, a different kind from all the former. The beauty of colours feeds the sight; the harmony of sounds delights our ears, the fragrancy of perfumes entertains our smell, and the delicious relishes our taste. And who can express the vast variety of impressions, with which our senses are gratefully wrought upon? These are so many, and so different in each sense singly, that if any one be considered apart, one would think Providence had made it its business, to contrive plenty of amusements and pleasures for that alone. There is so inexpressible a beauty resulting from the diversity of colours to please the eye, and so many charming sounds of different sorts to delight the ear; such a vast usefulness attending those that are articulate, whereby men without any difficulty communicate their thoughts to one another, relate things already past, discourse of the present, predict the future, and disclose those that are secret, and must otherwise continue unknown, that if mankind were left destitute of these conve-

niences, their life would be but very little better than beasts. If now to all the advantages of speech I should add those other entertainments of this sense, which result from the choirs of birds abroad, or from the melody of human voices, or from those improvements and imitations of natural music by art and instruments; it must be allowed me, that the several kinds of harmony are of infinite variety; of so great indeed they are, that the wit of man cannot conceive all the particular kinds, nor words explain and describe them distinctly. And yet all these are contrived for the service and delight of the ear. So nobly is this single sense provided for. A great deal might be said to the same purpose, concerning the objects pleasurable to the taste and the touch.

And, as our senses, and a right disposition of the organs which serve them, is a very valuable blessing, so is it likewise, that our limbs have all their due place and figure; that no part of our body is so distorted, or defective, as to be painful to ourselves, or to make our deformity a subject, either of melancholy to our friends or relations, or of jest and scorn to strangers. But, which is yet of higher importance, within this body so commodiously ordered, I have a glorious inhabitant; an understanding spirit; capable of discerning and receiving the truth; of distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil; nay, which tends more to its happiness and perfection, qualified to seek and find its Creator, to desire and gasp after him, to praise and cleave, and be united to him, by the cement of a most ardent and inviolable love. Another great instance of God's goodness to me, I acknowledge it, that I was reserved for the glorious times of the gospel; born in a country, where his

holy truth is professed; and among such friends as took effectual care to instruct and establish me in the faith, and devote me to God in his appointed ordinance. This is a mercy which vast numbers of people have not enjoyed, and therefore I have still the greater reason to be thankful for it; since their condition and mine are in other respects the same: nor can I boast of any qualification that should give me the preference, or recommend me to so singular a favour, which hath not been in like manner extended to them. The sum and sole account of so distinguishing a providence is this, that God was just in leaving them, but exceeding gracious in calling me. Nor ought I upon this occasion to forget to thank God, that he was pleased to spare my parents' lives, till the great business of my education was finished; that the care of me was not turned over to them who could not have the same tenderness and natural affection for me; that I escaped the many dreadful disasters, which some others did, and I was equally liable to suffer by: that the fire hath never burnt nor disfigured me, nor the water swallowed me up; that evil spirits were never permitted to torment me; that God hath shut the mouths of the beasts of prey, guarded me from their violence, kept me back from many a dangerous precipice, and preserved me from falls, and pits, losses or maimings of limbs, to which the giddiness of childhood, and the heat and folly of youth are perpetually exposed: and, lastly, that I was bred up, all along in the truth, faith, and obedience of him, and his will, till I have arrived at years of discretion, and now make that service of God my act and choice, to which I have been guided by his blessing upon the kind exertions of others.

## MEDITATION XLI.

*God's long-suffering.*

So great, so numerous, O Lord my God, are the proofs which thou hast given me of thy marvellous love! But, though I praise and adore thy Majesty for all thy wondrous works, yet art thou more justly to be admired for none, than for those acts of goodness and tender pity, which plainly speak the most enlarged bowels of our heavenly Father's paternal affection, to his unworthy and rebellious children. These are so unbounded, as to reach all without distinction. For thou despisest no man, castest off no man, abhorrest no man, except such only as by their own incorrigible folly, have given thee provocation, by first forsaking and contemning thee. And therefore I, O Lord, in particular, must own, that I have many mercies, and much indulgence of this kind to love and thank thee for. For thou hast frequently rescued me from dangers which had hemmed me in on every side, and left me no power to escape, by any strength or prudence of my own. When I was engaged in sinful actions, thou didst not leave me to perish in them; when I forgot thee, thou didst refresh my memory; when I was falling off from thee, thou didst recall and bring me home again; when I returned in obedience to that call, thou didst receive and meet me with open arms; and when my soul was wounded with grief for my former transgressions, thou didst comfort my sorrows, pardon my offences, accept my repentance,

and speak peace to my troubled mind. Nay, I should detract from the greatness of thy mercy, in acknowledging the benefit of so gracious a pardon, for my past actual transgressions only: since it is of the same mercy alone, that not only the crimes really committed by me, but all those too, which I should have committed, had not thy grace and good providence restrained and protected me, are not suffered to inflame my reckoning, at the last terrible day of account. For as I do with shame and deep remorse confess, that the sins I have fallen into are many and grievous; so I am sadly sensible of my own weakness and frailty, and that my faults would have far exceeded what they now have done, had not thy watchful care and goodness preserved me.

Now there are three ways, which I plainly perceive thou hast made use of to this purpose; and each hath greatly contributed to my safety. These are, the removal of the occasion, the power of resistance, and the sincerity thou hast granted to my will and affections: for without all dispute, I had been very frequently ensnared in sin, had temptations and opportunities offered themselves thicker to me; but the good providence of God so ordered the matter, that many times I had no evil suggestions prompting me to wickedness, nor any opportunity given the tempter for an assault. Again, I have frequently found myself attacked with great violence; but thou, O Lord, hast come to my succour, and poured in fresh recruits of grace and strength, whereby I was enabled to get the mastery over my appetites, and obstinately to hold out the siege, against the treachery of my own corrupt lusts, which would have betrayed and undermined me,

and all the fury of the tempter, who laboured to storm the fort of my soul. But some sins again there have been, which thy mercy, O Lord, hath kept me at so great a distance from, that I perfectly abhorred the very thoughts of them; and never found myself so much as molested with any temptation to contract so black and detestable a guilt.

O that this had been the case with me in all things, that offend the God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! But where it was not, I have not wanted plentiful experience of thy goodness and compassion. For, alas! my God, my conscience reproaches me with having too often and too heinously displeased thy Divine majesty. Wretch that I am, I have behaved myself unseemly in thy presence, I have done amiss and dealt wickedly, provoked thy anger, and deserved the hottest of thy vengeance. I have transgressed, and thou hast borne with it. I have sinned long and perversely, and still thou sufferest me to live. If I repent thou sparest me, if I return thou receivest me gladly. Nay, even while I dally and am so dilatory in this, my most important concern, thou inspirest me with better and more serious thoughts. When I wander, thou bringest me back; when I resist thy gracious methods, thou winnest me over and inclinest my will. When I am slothful, thou quickenest and spurrest me on; when I flee to thee for mercy, thou readily extendest it: Thou instructest my ignorance, thou driest up my tears, supportest my drooping spirits, raisest me up again when I fall, repairest my breaches and inward decays, grantest when I ask, art found when I seek thee, openest when I knock, showest me the good way, and

teachest me to walk in it, when thou hast discovered it to me. The grace of being thus favoured upon my own solicitous applications, is indeed very great; but greater still is that, by which thy liberality, O Lord, even prevents my application to thee. And yet even those gifts which I have received at thy bountiful hand, before I could ask, or wish, or even think of them, are such, that should I attempt to declare, and speak of them particularly, they would be found more than I am able to express. Had these unasked benefits prevented my requests and wishes then only, when the greenness of my years and understanding rendered me incapable of discerning my wants, and addressing to thee for proper supplies; this had been a compassion in some degree necessary, to the ignorance of my childhood, or the inconsideration of my youth. But, which enhances the obligation yet more, I find the same goodness following, and even preventing me still, though arrived at an age of maturity and judgment, when I am qualified to present before thee supplications suited to a due sense of my wants, when I am in a condition of seeking thee, and desiring and cleaving steadfastly to thee, as my chief and only good. But, O wonderful love! even now thou givest when I ask not, thou art with me, when I look not after thee, thou impartest to me those inestimable benefits, which I have not a just regard for; nay, which I am so far from desiring, as even to despise them.

Another mercy of the first quality, I cannot but esteem that providence of thine, which gives thy angels charge over me. That a creature so frail and so exposed, should have a constant guard of thy appointment, and not be left to travel through

this hazardous and troublesome wilderness of a world, like a stranger in an enemy's country, naked and alone; but have powerful protectors and most affectionate guides to keep him company, and be an unseen security to him. This surely, among other considerations, should abundantly convince us of the dignity of our souls; and how precious they are in thy sight, that thou art pleased to employ those bright and glorious spirits in ministering continually for them who shall be heirs of everlasting salvation.

But above all, I must needs admire that unwearied patience and pity, which no provocations of mine could harden against me, so far as to withdraw the influence of that preserving providence, though I have justly forfeited it long ago. And to this I am sensible it is, that I owe the being still in the land of the living, and the having escaped the many dreadful disasters, which stood ready to devour and destroy me. For what can I say, why the earth should not long ago have opened her mouth and swallowed me up, why I have not been struck through with hot thunderbolts, blasted with lightning, drowned in the waters, or suffered some untimely or uncommon death, which might evidently appear to carry the marks of a signal vengeance, inflicted on me for the heinousness of my sins? This there was reason enough to apprehend: for, when by sinning I departed from my God, I did henceforth not only deserve thy anger, and to be punished by thy hand immediately: but I put myself into a state of hostility, and armed the whole creation against me. Thus we find it here below, that if any great man's servant revolt from his master, he does not exasperate his lord alone,

but the whole family resent the thing, and look upon themselves concerned to punish the defection to the utmost of their power. And I, by parity of reason, after incurring the displeasure of thee, my God, the maker and governor of all things, ceased to deserve any friendship or good offices from any branch of this thy numerous family; and might expect, that every creature should rise up against me, and fight the quarrel of their incensed Lord. The earth might say, I owe thee no sustenance, and, instead of nourishing, ought rather to swallow thee up, because thou hast deserted my Maker and thy King, and listed thyself in the service of his enemy the devil. The sun might tell me, that he ought not to shed his beams upon my head, for the comforts of light and cherishing warmth, but if at all, to scorch me up, or else to hide those beams and withdraw them quite; that my safety and convenience ought now no longer to be his care, but only, how to revenge the dishonour done to that Lord who is the source of light, and by whose brightness it is that he shines at all. Thus every creature, in its turn and respective capacity, might threaten and upbraid my rebellion against our common Maker and Governor. These, I am well assured, are weapons which God hath often made the instruments of his angry justice, against those who affront and live in defiance of him and his laws: but in truth there is no need of his issuing out a fresh commission, or setting them on upon this occasion; for should God only withdraw that restraint he keeps upon the creatures, they would, when once left to themselves, soon make examples of sinners; and their not doing it every day must wholly be imputed to that controlling power, which

checks and keeps them in: because he who made us loves us, because he is long suffering and tender, not desiring the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.

But sure, when I sit down and compute my obligations, the more and greater I find these to be, the more thankful, more entire, more ready and cheerful I ought to show myself in my obedience, for fear at least the suspension of the punishment add to the weight of it; and forbearance abused inflame the wrath of God, in proportion to the time and the baseness of my having it extended to me in vain. O let us then, my soul, lay seriously to heart the wonderful compassion of God, in not cutting us off in our sins; let us admire that grace by which he hath elected us that we should be vessels of mercy prepared unto glory; let us adore that incomprehensible love wherewith he hath loved us. For upon this account did he wait patiently, incline his ear unto me, and hear my calling; turning his eyes away from my iniquities, as if he were loth to see the greatness of those transgressions, which his mercy disposed him not to punish. Therefore I say, did he overlook, as it were, and made as though he did not see, that he might commend the exceeding greatness of his patience, and give us the amplest testimony of his love. To this end (for I perfectly remember, and feel the smart still) did he pierce my heart, rousing it out of its lethargic stupidity, and making it sensible, how grievously it was wounded and bruised with sin, that so it might understand its own condition, and groan under the anguish of a broken spirit. He led me down to the gates of hell, showed me the flames and fiends, the torments and horrors of that dismal

place prepared for the damned; and when he had thus brought me to a sight of misery and danger; when my heart was overwhelmed with grief and terror, and almost sunk in despair; then did he turn again and revive me, let in fresh comforts upon my soul, inspired me first with hopes of pardon for my sins, and then bestowed that pardon with the hopes of which he had sustained me. And this pardon is so frank, so absolute, that all the guilt and resentment is wholly taken away by it; he will not now, I am sure, take this revenge in my condemnation; he will not expose me to shame by upbraiding me with my offences; he will not suffer any unkind remembrances of what a wretch I have been heretofore, to lessen his love of me, as I am now. And these are all very engaging considerations; for how many are there, who, though they pass over injury, so as at no other time to make the offender smart for it, yet take the liberty of frequently casting it in his teeth! Or if they smother their resentments in silence, yet bear a secret grudge, and remember the fault with bitterness and rancour! Either of which is very distant from a true and full forgiveness. But nothing can be more unlike than these, to the clemency and benignity of the Divine nature. For God gives liberally, and forgives absolutely; and that repenting sinners may want no encouragement to trust in his mercy, and depend upon a favourable reception, when they have recourse to him, the greatness of the guilt we are assured is no bar to pardon; for where the offence abounded there it is often manifest, that grace is wont much more to abound. Of this the scriptures furnish many eminent testimonies for our consolation. Such was St.

Peter, who, after having thrice solemnly and deliberately denied his Lord, had the care of Christ's sheep three several times committed to his trust. Such was St. Paul, who from a blasphemer of the truth, and a persecutor of the Church of God, was made a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. Such, once more, was St. Matthew, who from sitting at the receipt of custom, and the infamous character of a publican, was chosen to be an Apostle, and had the honour of being the first writer of the New Testament.

## MEDITATION XLII.

*Resistance of Temptation.*

To all his former valuable gifts, God hath been pleased to add the restraining power of his Holy Spirit in the hours of trial. By which I mean the power of resisting and abstaining from, not only the pleasures of flesh and sense, but all other temptations and vices whatsoever, to which it is no less criminal to yield, than it would be to those of carnality and luxury. And this I count a privilege so happy, as to challenge that acknowledgment of praise, he that is mighty, hath done for me great things. Some perhaps there are who have but a mean esteem of this blessing; but to me it appears a very signal one. For I am sensible what enemies I have to encounter, and how very great a proportion of strength is necessary, for waging this spiritual war with any tolerable success. The first enemy, which makes head against the safety of our soul, is our own flesh; and the assaults upon it are those perpetual lustings against the Spirit, of which every man hath such woful experience, in his own breast. Now this is an enemy, from whose cruelty there is no running away; it is a domestic foe, an intestine war, and consequently a combat of infinite hazard and danger. Thou canst not, O my soul, dispossess or drive him out of thy quarters. The condition of thy nature hath tied him close to thee, and carry him about thou must wheresoever thou goest. Now what can aggravate our perils or our

misery more than this, that we are under an indispensable necessity of subsisting the forces that fight against us? Kill them we must not, and starve them out we cannot. Consider this and then tell me, how strict a watch thou oughtest to keep over a seducer that lieth in thy bosom.

But neither is this the only adversary we have to engage with; there is another which lays close siege, and compasseth us in on every side. I mean the present evil world, which hath no less than five avenues, always open to make his approaches by: the five senses of our body, through which he wounds me with his darts, and so death comes up into my windows and enters into my palaces.

The third is that common and inveterate enemy of mankind, that old serpent, which is more subtle than all the beasts of the field. An enemy that attacks us unseen, and consequently more difficult to be avoided. Nor does he always proceed in the same method; but sometimes falls on with open violence, sometimes trepans us by secret cunning and fraudulent insinuation. His malice, however, and his cruelty, are always the same, and the end at which he aims by the most different means, is constantly our mischief and eternal ruin. And who now is sufficient, to vanquish, shall I say? nay, even to hold out, and keep himself from being vanquished by this triple alliance and joint force? of these things I thought fit to have the more express notice taken, that my soul might have the juster notion of the excellence, but withal the difficulty too, of that conquest, for which the power of the Holy Spirit is always necessary. They who are happy in it, should be duly sensible how valuable a gift they have received from God, and in that sense might

excite their hearts to a more earnest love of their Preserver and great Benefactor, who alone could bestow it upon them. For it is through the Lord that we do all the great acts of this kind, and tread them under, that rise up against us. He it is, that subdues and crucifies our flesh, with its affections and lusts: he that protects us against this present evil world, and mortifies us to all its vanities; and he it is, that breaks the serpent's head, and bruises Satan under our feet, with all his wicked wiles and temptations. Is there not reason then from the contemplation of this grace, and of the conquests it makes, and the power of making them which is received from above, to cry out again and again, he that is mighty hath done for me great things, and holy is his name?

## MEDITATION XLIII.

*Encouragements for Hope.*

By being enabled to vanquish temptations, I am put into a condition of escaping eternal death; but it is yet a farther instance of mercy, that the Lord my God affords me such grace, as may qualify me for inheriting the blessings of eternal life. And this I take chiefly to consist in three things; the hatred of past evil, the contempt of present good, and the desire of that good which is to come: which desire is also supported and inflamed by another precious gift of God, the hope of obtaining that future blessedness. Now there are likewise three considerations, which uphold and strengthen my heart in this hope: and that so firmly, that no want of desert, on my part, not even the lowest and most mortifying thoughts of my vileness and unworthiness, nor the highest and most enlarged notions of the excellence of that bliss in heaven, can cast me down from this high tower of hope. No, my soul is rooted and grounded in it, past the power of being shaken with any melancholy misgivings. And the foundations that bear me up in all this firmness of mind are three. First, I consider the greatness of God's love, expressed in my adoption. Secondly, the truth of God, which hath promised this blessedness. And, thirdly, the power of God to make good whatever he hath promised to the uttermost. Let then my foolish desponding heart raise scruples to confound me, and object never so importunately

—"Vain man, consider what thou art, and what thou fondly imaginest thou shalt one day be; what canst thou see in thyself, a creature so little, so polluted, to think that ever thou shouldest attain to a state of such purity, such excellent glory? Canst thou discern any proportion at all between a finite creature and infinite happiness; or art thou able to discover any such extraordinary merit to ground thy hopes upon, as should incline God to exalt thee so much above what nature seems to have qualified thee for?" These difficulties I am in no degree terrified by, but can with great assurance return this answer to them, and rest my soul upon it; I know whom I have believed, and am verily persuaded, that God would not have adopted me for his own child, had he not loved me exceedingly; that he would never have promised, had he not resolved to perform; and that if these things could be supposed greater than really they are, yet the putting me in actual possession of them cannot exceed his power, because I am sure he can do whatsoever pleaseth him, both in heaven and earth. And therefore I can never love God enough, for inspiring and comforting me with this hope, and putting me into the way of attaining the bliss he hath encouraged me to expect at his merciful hands. And great encouragements I have from those earnests and antepasts of his future goodness which he vouchsafes me even in this world. For such, I reckon, are his following after, and overtaking me, when I fled away from him; his controlling and banishing my fears by the charms of meekness and kindness, cherishing and frequently reviving my hopes, when I lay languishing in despair; his even constraining me to better obedience, by heaping on

me fresh benefits, notwithstanding my ingratitude for those I had formerly received; his giving me a better sense of things, and enabling me to relish the sweetness of spiritual joys, when my palate desired none, but such as were impure and merely sensual: his bursting my bonds asunder, and setting me at liberty, from the bondage of evil habits, which I had not the power to break; and his receiving me with so much tenderness, when by his help I had weaned my affections from the world, and forsaken all to follow him. He would not have done thus much for me already, had he not intended to do more hereafter; and therefore I will trust his word for this fulness of bliss in reversion, and dare depend upon the full accomplishment of it to his servant (though of myself most unworthy,) since I have such grounds of assurance from the many precious pledges of an inviolable love exhibited, and paid me down in hand.

Proceed then, my soul, in these most pleasing contemplations, and sustain thyself against all desponding thoughts, by recollecting those many other proofs of the Divine goodness, which have been so peculiar, so secretly conveyed to thee, that none but thyself could be privy to them. Think of those retired pleasures, with which thy Lord entertains thee in secret, upon thy retreat from the world, and private conversation with him; what delicious food he hath provided for the satisfying of thy spiritual hunger: what inestimable treasures of mercy he hath given thee richly to enjoy; with what secret longings he inspires thee, and how plentifully thou hast been made to drink of the ravishing cup of his love. Was it then not a noble condescension, a most astonishing instance of compassion, that he

left me not destitute of spiritual comforts? Me, I say, who was a slothful and ungracious servant, a fugitive, a rebel, and one who never had returned to him and my duty, if he in mere, in boundless pity, had not called me home? For thou canst not surely but remember, my soul, that if at any time I was under sharp trials, he interposed with seasonable supports: if I was ready to be overpowered by dangers, he presently fortified me against them: if I was dejected with grief, he sustained my spirits; if I was wavering in my duty, he strengthened and kept me steady: if I grew dry and heavy, fearful and faint, he poured in the refreshments of his Holy Spirit, and gave a grateful relish to my devotions. O I never can, I never ought to forget, when I have been reading, or hearing, or praying, or meditating, in private or in public, how often he hath shone in upon me, and by a ray of heavenly light, guided my mind to a right understanding of his holy word, opened mine eyes that I might see the meaning, the wondrous hidden things of his law; collected my scattered thoughts, put a stop to my wanderings; and made them all to centre in himself, with a desire too intense to be expressed: how often he hath drawn off my mind from earthly objects, and raised it up to heavenly delights; and fixed it there, and entertained me with those pleasures, which are the portion of the blessed above. These and many more expressions of his mercy I have felt and rejoiced in; more than I can, more than perhaps would become me to mention particularly, lest I should seem to exceed the bounds of modesty, to insinuate an opinion of some more than common worth in one so highly favoured, and arrogate to myself a part of that glory which is en-

tirely his. For according to the vulgar notions of these matters, the grace of the giver, and the privilege of the receiver, are so closely connected, that he who ought alone to be praised, is seldom praised alone; for the person who is so signally happy in the gift, is generally admitted into a share of the value and commendation due to it. But alas! what blessing hath any of us, even the best of us all which he hath not received? and what applause can belong to him, who received all the powers of doing well freely, as if this receiving were in any degree meritorious? To thee, therefore, O Lord my God, to to thee alone, be the praise, the glory and thanksgiving: but to me, I am sure, belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face, for the numberless evil things I have done against thee, and the numberless good things I have been blessed with from thee.

And indeed my thanks are by no means what they ought to be, except these articles be both taken in. For, though the consideration of thy goodness be by itself just matter of gratitude and wonder; yet it is still more engaging, more astonishing, when that of our offences and grievous wickedness is added to it. For, if it be a commendation of bounty, to give largely where the receivers have deserved nothing; how shall we find ideas large enough to represent, and worthily extol that kindness, which returns good for evil, and bestows liberally, where men have been as liberal in their injuries and provocations? What strange bowels of a fatherly affection are those, which the most insolent, most perverse, most undutiful children cannot harden against themselves! And yet, my soul, this is directly the state of the case between God and

thee. Many things there are, which he in mercy forgives, many that he forgives most readily, and in great abundance. But then we must remember, that the evils he forgives are entirely ours, and the good things he bestows are entirely his own. He is always ready to pardon, he is not less ready to give: the one proves his boundless pity, the other his boundless liberality; or rather, indeed, both the one and the other prove, that neither his pity nor his liberality have any bounds. Let us therefore give glory to God by confessing the evil we have done; let us do it, likewise, by confessing the good we have received. Let us acknowledge the evil to be all our own, that his mercy may be inclined to pardon it; let us acknowledge the good to be all his, that his bounty may continue, and add to it. And let this be our constant daily work; for we can never exceed in any expressions of that gratitude, which is due, both upon the account of the sins he hath pardoned, and of the gifts and graces he hath bestowed. Thus, I say, every one should be employed, who thinks himself, or who desires to be a true lover of God: for true love will be always labouring to express itself in such confessions and acknowledgments.

And what now do we think should be the result of all these considerations? What indeed but this, that every one who lays them seriously to heart, shall take his mind off from all other objects, and place his love on God alone, and still hope in him who hath done so much for him? that he should find himself very tenderly affected, and wonderfully transported with every reflection upon such amazing kindness and compassion? If any man can observe so much mercy, so strong obligations, and yet

be wanting in affection to God, let such a one be assured, that this coldness proceeds from his neglect and thoughtlessness. For every one who will be at the pains to consider, will easily find himself so highly indebted to God, that all he can do in this service is little enough, and much less than is owing him in return. It is true indeed all men's engagements in this point are not the same: nor hath God distributed his blessings with a perfectly even hand; but they that have least have more than they can lay claim to, more than they can ever be sufficiently grateful for. Admitting then that a man be not furnished even with all those graces which are necessary to salvation, yet will not this bear such a one out in murmuring against Providence, or charging God foolishly. For God is wise and just in all his dispensations: he proceeds upon measures, which, though unknown to us, are yet most reasonable in themselves. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth. And being no man's debtor, but absolutely master of his own favours, he may give where he sees fit, and resume what he had given, when and from whom he sees fit, without being accountable for either. Let him, therefore, who hath not those gifts, lament his own misfortune with humility, and labour after them, and pray for them most earnestly; and let him, who hath them, make a just estimate of the mighty blessing, and give all diligence to be truly thankful to God for it.

## MEDITATION XLIV.

*Love of God in the death of Christ.*

For my own part I do most humbly confess, that the benefits I have received from thee, my Lord and my God, are immeasurably great, are innumerably many: so many and so great, that I should be of all creatures the most unworthy and insensible, should I not always love and always praise thee for them. For whatever good thing I am now, or ever was, or ever shall be possessed of, is from thee, the Supreme Good, from whom all that is good proceeds. And yet there is one thing still behind, which I must own inflames my heart, and excites my affection, more powerfully than all the rest. For never was any instance of thy kindness so engaging, so irresistible, as that most shameful and most bitter death, which thou, O blessed Jesus, didst submit to for the accomplishment of the most glorious work of our redemption. This singly, or at least this with the rest, lays indisputable claim to all our life, to all our labours, to all our obedience, to all our love. This, I say, is the consideration, which, of all others, excites our devotion most frequently, entertains it most agreeably, and raises it to the loftiest pitch. For in this great design the great Creator of the world takes pains, and seems to have retrieved the fabric of his own framing with much more difficulty than he at first built it all out of nothing. With what ease that was done, the Psalmist very lively expresses. He spake the word

and they were made, he commanded and they were created; but for the restitution of lost men, gracious God! how many, how grievous, how long a series of labours and sorrows didst thou undergo! Come hither then, my soul, and behold what manner of love thy Saviour hath bestowed on thee; who, without any manner of necessity to compel him, without any prospect of profit to induce him, but purely of his own free mercy, was content to suffer such hardships, such barbarous indignities for thy sake! Well might I say, that this single act of goodness is an overbalance to all the rest. For though it be a great kindness to lay out what we have for another's advantage, yet what we have bears no proportion to what we are; nor ought that to be compared with the giving a man's own self. And if the most exalted friendship of which we ever heard, can go no higher than one friend's laying down his life for another, how much more noble was that charity of which the Son of God left us this unexampled proof, in his laying down his life for his enemies. And that this was our condition the Apostle declares, When we were enemies, says he, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and again, scarcely for a righteous man will one die, but God herein commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He removed down from the mansions of bliss in heaven, that he might carry us back thither with him. O unspeakable love! O most amazing condescension! that God for the sake of man should be made man, that God for man should die in the flesh, that he should submit to be tempted in all things like as we are, only without sin. See

at how inestimable a price, see with what difficulty man was redeemed; who had forfeited and enslaved himself to the devil; and had he not been ransomed at so vast an expense, must unavoidably have suffered eternal damnation, with that tyrannical master of his own choosing. These reflections will show thee, O man, how much thou art bound to love God; and if he calls thee to it, how patiently, how willingly, nay, with how cheerful and eager zeal thou oughtest to endure hardships, and pain, and tortures, for him who hath endured so much incomparably greater for thee. For it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God. And therefore let my soul gladly embrace her crucified Jesus; let her, my sweetest Saviour, drink deep into thy heavenly Spirit; let this most moving theme be her constant meditation, that I may never one moment be unmindful of him that died for me. I am determined from henceforth not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; lest other vain mistaken notions should draw my knowledge off from the firm bottom of saving faith: and O, let this wonderful love of thine take possession of all the love I am capable of, lest any rival passion insinuate itself into my heart, and I be swallowed up with a torrent of worldly affections.

In thus devoting my whole self to thee, I shall consult not my duty only, but my happiness too. For those hearts of which the sweetness of thy love hath taken full possession, are all tranquillity and joy: there is no place for fear to damp them, or lust to defile them, or anger to distract them, or pride to swell them, or vain-glory to blow them about, or ambition to gall them, or covetousness to

narrow them, or sorrow to deject them, or envy to emaciate them; in short, no disorderly vice disturbs their peace, or corrupts their joy, but they continue firm and calm, like those upper regions, where clouds and storms have no power. And what can we imagine God will give, or what will he not give hereafter to those good men who taste so largely of his bounty here? For even the best of those gifts men have in hand are temporal: but those which he hath promised to bestow upon them that love him, in the next world, are eternal, and consequently so much more desirable than any temporal advantages, that even to make a comparison between them were to injure and disparage them. For this is a condition common to all temporal advantages; that they are very hardly got, and very easily lost again; that, while we have them in possession, they are kept at the expense of a great deal of anxious care, and parted with to our great grief; and if ever retrieved again, yet not without a great deal of toil and trouble. But the happiness of the next world is not capable of loss or diminution; the enjoyment of it is pleasure without allay, and ease without fraud or disturbance; the desires of it are always keen, and the delights of possession always new. No man receives them but with full security, that they shall no more be taken from him against his will, than he shall ever have the will to divest himself of them.

## MEDITATION XLV.

### *The Promises of God.*

This may persuade us to make the promises of God another incentive to the love of him. For, though the benefits he hath given his servants are great; yet those which he hath engaged to give them, are incomparably greater. Now these are, rest from our labours, a change from bondage to liberty, from fear to security, from grief to comfort; resurrection to a life immortal after death; and after that resurrection, exquisite and endless joy; in a word, he hath promised to give us himself. So unspeakably glorious are his promises. And the love which these beget in us, he expects should exert itself after a very particular manner; and that is, by a vehement desire of the promise, in which it is impossible to be guilty of excess. In other cases we blame men for being impatient; but this case is an exception to the rest, and here men are to be commended for it. To be contented with delays argues languid desires and coldness of affection; and as the wise man observes very truly, Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick. Since then these blisses are to be obtained no where but in our heavenly country, it betrays too great an indifference for such noble reversions, when we do not long most earnestly to get at them, and are not weary and perfectly sick of every thing that conspires to detain us from them.

Let us then raise our thoughts as high, and

stretch them as wide as ever we can, that we may try to represent to ourselves in some measure the nature and perfection of that joy of the saints, to which no other is equal, no other like. Now that chief good, which we find called by the several titles of life, light, blessedness, wisdom, eternity, and the like, is but one most simple and supreme good, perfect and self-sufficient, without which no other thing can either be perfect, or indeed be at all: this good, I say, is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Here then is that one thing which is necessary: for that must certainly be a necessary good, in which all good is, nay, which itself is good, the one whole and sole good. If each of these things, which we call good, minister so much delight, how much must flow from the possession of Him, who comprehends them all, and is as much superior to them in excellence, as the Creator is above the creature! Let us not then lavish away our time and pains upon things that only flatter us with deceitful promises of happiness; but let us love this one good, for that alone can suffice for all our exigencies, and fill all our largest desires. It is but lost labour to attempt a just description of the bliss reserved for us in our heavenly Father's kingdom; no words can express, no mind confined in flesh can expand itself sufficiently to conceive them. For when we have let loose our thoughts, still those joys are of a compass larger than they can fetch. Many and glorious things indeed have been spoken of this city of God, but yet the half of the truth hath not been told us. This is the only instance, in which report can never exceed, and praises can never flatter; no knowledge can come up to it, no glory compare with it. The kingdom of

God, in a word, is full of light and peace, charity and meekness, honour and glory, sweetness and love, joy and everlasting bliss; to be short, of every thing that is good, more and better than can be possibly expressed or conceived: but still this is no argument why I should not speak of it at all, or represent its excellencies as well as I can, because I cannot do it so well as I would. We believe the majesty of God to be unspeakably glorious, but no man is so extravagant sure, to infer from thence, that we ought never to speak of him; nay, it follows rather, that we should speak the most glorious things we are able, that they who hear us may believe him to be still far above all we can say of him. Much more, it is evident, may be comprehended by the understanding, than a man can find proper words to utter; and yet the most profound and capacious mind cannot comprehend or have any ideas of the kingdom of Heaven in any degree suitable to its real excellence. And therefore the life to come is what we have represented to us by the following character, that it is eternal in duration, and a blessedness to all eternity, a state where there is the most profound security and tranquillity, pleasure without passion, love without fear, day without night, activity and strength without possibility of decay, perfect unanimity, all the souls in it rejoicing in the contemplation of God, and past all apprehension of being ever deprived of his beatific presence: a city blest with the most glorious inhabitants, where all the saints and angels take up their perpetual residence; the splendour whereof consists in the shining graces of God's elect; where health abounds, and truth reigns for ever; where there is no deceiving, no being deceived; out of

which none of the happy are ever expelled, into which none of the wretched are ever admitted.

This is that happy life, which they who are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, shall for ever enjoy, and in which they shall be like the spirits of just men made perfect, and shall reign with them for ever. What such have here anticipated by faith, they shall there have in sight; beholding with pure hearts the substance of their Creator; rejoicing with never-ceasing and exceeding great joy; united inseparably to God, and to each other by the full fruition of the Divine goodness, and the charms of mutual love: then shall their once scattered bodies be restored, and put on immortality and incorruption; and thus united, they shall be made free subjects of their heavenly country, and invested with all the privileges of the city of God. Then shall they reap the fruits of all their holy labours, those eternal recompenses, the promises and distant expectation whereof, sustained their spirits in the many long and painful conflicts here below. A general gladness there shall overflow, and these joys shall be so agreeable, that they shall always be thankful to their bountiful rewarder, for the plenty with which he hath so nobly enriched them, and yet that plenty shall abate no man's satisfaction in the abundance he enjoys. There every man's heart shall be open to every man, for every breast shall be so white and pure, that the soul so cleansed shall find cause to thank God for washing away their stains in the blood of his Son, but not at all to be ashamed, or blush for any of their old blemishes; and why should they not see into one another's hearts freely, who have no secrets in reserve, no separate interest to promote, no deceit

to manage, no faults to conceal? Neither sins nor sinners are in heaven, for they who once were such, from the instant of their entering that place of purity, are out of all possibility ever to be so any more. None of the darkest secrets, none of the deepest mysteries shall then continue such: the blessed shall be let into a distinct knowledge of them; and which is infinitely better, they shall be ever viewing and admiring the adorable perfections of God himself.

This human nature shall then be advanced to its just and utmost perfection, incapable of being exalted or sunk lower any more. All the excellences communicated to it by being Made after the likeness of its maker, shall then be set at their highest pitch, and the corruption and defects introduced by sin utterly done away. Nay, we shall even rise above what was given us at our first creation, though we had been so happy as to retain our primitive advantages. We shall understand and judge without error, remember without forgetfulness, think without wandering, love without dissimulation; we shall have sense without any thing to offend it, ease without pain, life without death; power of acting without obstruction, fulness without nauseating, and such a perfection of every faculty, that there shall be in us all imaginable soundness and vigour, without any sort of disease or decay. Whatever maim our bodies may have suffered here, by sudden disasters or wasting distempers, or mortified sores; whatever limbs have been lost by the biting of wild beasts, or the cruelty of men no less barbarous than they, by war, or fire, or any other dismembering accident; nay, even the weakness and deformities of sickness and old age, shall

all be repaired at the general resurrection, every defect supplied, every loss restored; and the body complete in all its parts, sound and youthful, beautiful and gay, shall then, together with the soul, be clothed with everlasting health and immortality. So happy shall all the saints be at that day; but though all shall be happy, yet will not they all be equally so; their blisses then will hold proportion to their graces now; and one star differs from another star in that glory, because the merciful King of glory rewards every man according to his works.

## MEDITATION XLVI.

*The Almighty Power of God.*

Thy mighty hand, O God, at all times and upon all occasions the same, created angels in heaven, and worms upon earth; nor was the one of these operations less a demonstration of thy omnipotence than the other. For as no hand but thine could give being to creatures so noble as the angels, so none but thine could frame the vilest insect. Thine only could spread out the firmament, thine only could produce the least spire of grass: thine only could fashion these wonderful bodies of ours, thine only make the least hair of our heads white or black: for to that power which knows no bounds, all things are not only possible, but are equally so.

To thee there is the same difficulty in making a worm, as an angel; to thee the same ease in creating the whole heaven, as a single leaf; the colouring a hair, and compacting a body, are the same thing, and the Almighty finds no difference between hanging the earth upon the waters, and supporting the waters by dry ground. Whatever pleased him, was done in heaven and in earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places; and done exactly as it pleased him. He made them all, and me among the rest, according to the excellency of his wisdom and skill, and power, and good pleasure. Thy hand, hadst thou thought fit, could have made me a stone, or a bird, or a serpent, or any of the brutal kind; but such was thy goodness that it would not. If

then, I would be satisfied why I am none of these, but a creature by far more excellent than all these; no other answer can be returned to that question but this, that thy wondrous goodness was pleased thus to order it, and that it did thus order without any consideration on my part to deserve, or any way incline thee to grant me such preference above the creatures of lower attainments, and less honourable station.

How shall I therefore praise thee, most mighty Lord? How shall I be able to contribute to thy glory, who could contribute nothing to my own existence? Let thy own works magnify thee, according to the greatness and multitude of thy power and mercies. Thy praise is too vast to be comprehended by thought, expressed by words, or heard by any mortal ear. These all are finite, and pass away: but thy glory is infinite, and the praise of it endureth for ever. Our thoughts begin, and soon come to an end; our words form different sounds, and vanish into air; our ear receives impression of those sounds, and quickly loses them again; but thy praise is fixed, and abideth to all eternity.

What mortal man then is sufficient to tell thy noble acts, or set forth all thy praise? He praises thee indeed, who acknowledges himself unable to praise thee. We only praise thee in, and by thyself, and all our praise is in thee. Then have we true praise, when thou approvest thy own works in us. When we seek it from any other, we lose true praise; for that is transitory, thine eternal; and as oft as the transitory is grasped at, the eternal slips away from us. Let me therefore love and seek thee alone, from whom is true and lasting praise. Give me thyself, and so shall I be able to praise

thee; for, what am I without thee, but dust and ashes, a dead dog, a loathsome carcase; and how should death and corruption praise the God of the spirits of all flesh, that inhabiteth eternity?

Can darkness praise light, and death life? Yet such is the difference between thee and me. Thou art light, I am darkness: Thou art life, I am death: Thou an eternal substance, I vanity and nothing. And can a mortal man, who to-day is, and to-morrow is not, praise him that endures the same for ever? Can rottenness and worms add to the glory of the great God? Can he that is conceived and born and brought up in sin, praise that holiness whose pure eyes cannot behold iniquity? No, my God, let thy own incomprehensible power and wisdom, and goodness, thy boundless mercy and unspeakable clemency, let these, for these alone are qualified to set forth thy praises; even that almighty power, and infinite love, by which thou hast created me to natural, and regenerated me to spiritual life, O God, the life of my soul.

I will therefore rejoice under the shadow of thy wings, and hope in thy goodness, which first gave me being. Thy bounty made me, let it also help me; preserve that creature which thy goodness made, from perishing in its own wickedness and misery. For how am I the better for being made, if I be suffered to sink into my own corruption? Hast thou, my God, created man for nought? Despise not then the work of thy own hands; but govern and preserve it. Thou madest me out of nothing, and if thou leavest me destitute of thy protection, I shall quickly return to nothing. For as I was not, when thou first commandest me into being, so unless thou be pleased to assist and sup-

port me, there is that principle of destruction in me, which will soon make me not to be again.

Help me, therefore, thou God of my life, that I perish not. Hadst thou not made me, I had never been at all: because thou madest me, I am what I am; but if thou preserve me not, I am no more. Let then that love, which prevailed with thee to give me being, prevail also for the governance and preservation of that being. Save what thou hast created, and complete thy mercy; for better were it never to have created me, than to create me for sin and destruction. The benefit I ask is not less than that vouchsafed already: thy love is still the same, for thou hatest nothing that thou hast made, and art the same kind God, even love itself. Thy hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither thine ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but my iniquities have separated me and my God, between darkness and light; between the shadow of death and life; between falsehood and truth; between my perishing and thy enduring and everlasting substance.

These are the thick shades of night, with which I am encompassed in the dark dungeon of this mortal body, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in my heart. O that thy powerful voice would issue that irresistible command, Let there be light! so should darkness disperse from off the face of the deep, so the dry land appear, and bring forth abundantly, the green herb, and the fruit of righteousness after his kind. O Father of life, leave me not under the power of wicked imaginations, nor give me a proud look: but turn away from thy servant an haughty mind and vain concupiscence, and possess my heart with thy grace, that I may serve and

always think on thee with reverence and godly fear.

Enlighten my eyes that they may see thee, and not exalt themselves; but gaze with humble wonder on the things that are too high to be thoroughly perceived: and fix my sight and desires on the blessings of thy right, and not on those of thy left hand. Attract my heart with that goodness thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that I may love thee with everlasting love; and not wander after vain objects, and, blinded with their deceitful appearance, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness; but that by thy gracious guidance and mighty protection, I may be safely led, and escape those manifold snares, which the subtle nature of our common enemy, lays every where in our way to catch unwary souls: of which he who wisely had considered our danger, hath given us this fair warning, All that is in the world, is the lust of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Since then every place is so thick set with snares, and every step we take so full of hazard, who shall be able to promise himself safety? Surely none but he whom thou securest from the desire of the eyes, by taking from him a proud look; none but he, whom thou defendest against the lust of the flesh, by turning from him vain concupiscence; none but he whom thou hast made proof against the pride of life, by delivering him from a haughty and insolent and profane mind. Happy the man who is thus armed, thus protected; his enemies shall not be able to do him violence, the son of wickedness shall not hurt him.

I beg thee, therefore, O my Redeemer, for thy

own mercies' sake, let me not fall into the snares laid for me, nor give the adversary occasion to triumph in my ruin. Let my God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, yea, let them which hate him flee before him. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so do thou drive them away; and like as the wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God. Thou, Lord, art the Father of the fatherless, hear the cry of thy desolate and helpless children. Sleep not, nor slumber, O thou keeper of Israel, for the watchful enemy that labours Israel's destruction, doth neither slumber nor sleep.

O Light, before which all other light is darkness, which no night can damp, no obstruction intercept, no blindness shut out; thou that enlightenest every thing in every part, at once and always; receive me in thy brightness, that I may see thee in thyself, and myself in thee, and all things else under thee. If thou withdraw thy shining, the clouds of my ignorance gather, and I am overwhelmed with sin and error. All is black, all evil without thee: for what can possibly be good, which is destitute of thee, the true, the chief, the only good?

I know, O Lord, and acknowledge, that besides thee alone not only all without, but all within me, is misery and want. And otherwise than wretched I cannot be, when distracted by the vast variety of worldly objects, and drawn off from thee, the one supreme good. I pursue first one, and then another, but cannot meet with satisfaction from any: I starve in the midst of plenty, and am but mocked with the empty pomp of a feast, when my soul feeds on any thing but thee; for thou alone canst satisfy my hunger, assuage my pains, and fill my large desires.

How wretched, doubly wretched, is that soul, which forsakes thee, with whom is fulness and joy, to follow the world, where it is sure to suffer poverty and pain! The world cries out, "I cannot satisfy thee." Thou sayest, "eat and let thy soul be satisfied." And yet (such is the perverseness of my appetite) I follow after that which cannot, and forsake that which can and would content me. Correct, O spiritual physician, this disorderly eagerness for trash, and help me to relish the wholesome food of souls, and to labour for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.

The great things thou hast done for me already, encourage me to ask and hope for more. I was not, and thou gavest me being; I was lost and thou hast restored me; dead and thou hast raised me; thou enduredst death to purchase my life; and though the King of heaven, deliveredst up thy person to ransom the least and most unworthy of thy subjects, thy blood was not thought a price too dear for my redemption, and I may truly say, that in some sense, thou lovedst me better than thyself, since thou wert content to die for my sake. By so gracious a covenant, by so precious a ransom, am I redeemed from slavery and exile, from punishment and death. And that the remembrance of such astonishing mercies might be for ever fresh and present with me, thou hast called me by thy name, marked me for thy own with thy blood, anointed me with that oil of the Holy Spirit, with which thyself wast anointed, and distinguished me with the most honourable of all titles, that of Christian. Thus have thy grace and mercy all along prevented me. And infinite are the dangers from which thou hast delivered me. Thou hast been my guide

and teacher, when I strayed through ignorance; my reprover and corrector when I offended through carelessness or presumption; my comfort in trouble, my support in despair; when I fell, thou tookest me up; when I stood, it was because thou upheldest me; when I advanced, thou conductedst me; when I approached, thou receivedst me; when I slept, thou didst guard me; when I cried, thou didst hear and answer me.

## MEDITATION XLVII.

*God's Omniscience.*

All my innumerable mercies I thankfully ascribe to thee, my God, and recollect with such a sensible delight, that I could dwell upon them for ever, and wish to speak and think of thee alone; to love thee with all my heart, and mind, and strength, and with every faculty and part of my soul and body be constantly employed in praising thee. O how blessed are those pious men who can rejoice in thee! But thou, my God, seest all my imperfections, and how far distant I am from this happiness. Thy eyes are a thousand times more piercing than the sun, penetrating the deepest and darkest recesses, and watching continually in every place to behold the evil and the good.

For thou, who fillest and governest all things, hast a constant regard to the work of thy own hands: hadst thou not loved thy creatures thou hadst not made them; and the same love which made, will always continue to guide, and preserve, and watch over them. Thus thou art ever present with me, always marking well my goings, and numbering all my steps; thou standest over me as a watchful sentinel, and observest me as nicely as if all care of every thing besides had been dismissed and I remained the only object of thy concern; for so entire, so unalterable is the perfection of thy sight and knowledge, that it is neither more exact being confined to one object, nor at all perplexed or confused by taking into view the most distant

and even innumerable. Because as thou considerest the whole with all its parts in one distinctly, so dost thou see all, though never so many, never so different, never so remote; and seest them all together, with one and the same act of thy Divine knowledge. This is of such unbounded comprehension, so incapable of being separated in its own operations, or distracted with variety of objects, that one and many are the same, and both understood and observed alike, because falling alike under the same undivided and entire wisdom, which applies the whole of itself to the consideration of each and every thing.

And thus I ought to believe myself, and every thing belonging to me, as much under thy eye, as if thy providence had no other care: for thou art always present, always ready, if thou do but find me so. Wheresoever I go, thou goest along with me, except I first forsake and fall from thee. Wherever I am, thou abidest with me; for thou art every where; that I may find thee upon every remove, and so subsist by thee: for otherwise I must perish, not being able to subsist without thee. I must acknowledge, then, that every thing I do is done in thy presence; thou understandest every action, and the nature of it, much better than even I who am the doer of it. For let me do what I will, and when I will, still thou art present at all times equally, an incessant observer of all my views and intentions, my inclinations and inward complacencies, my words and actions. So good reason have I to cry out with David, Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and understandest my thoughts afar off.

Thou seest how the Spirit moves me, whence it comes, where it rests, and whither it tends, be-

cause thou art the weigher of spirits. The outward act, like a well-leaved tree, may be fair and flourishing, and impose upon the eyes of men; but the all-seeing Judge goes deeper, he examines the sap and root thoroughly. If this be rotten or bitter, if the intentions be corrupt, he deals with the tree according to its root, and recompenses the man after the bent of his heart. The evil that he would do is punished, and the good he endeavoured and heartily desired to do, but could not, is as kindly accepted as if it had been actually accomplished. Thou seest, as soon as I begin to move, what I design and delight in; thy ears and eyes are ever open; thou attendest diligently, and enterest punctually into thy book, whatever I do, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, that the one may receive a bountiful reward, the other its deserved punishment. And this shall surely be when the books shall be opened, and all mankind shall be judged out of the things which are written in those books, according to their works.

Thus may we understand what is said of thee, that thou searchest out all perfection; because in human actions thou hast a greater regard to what we wish and intend to do, than to what we really do. And when I seriously consider, that this is the method by which thou proceedest, shame and confusion, fear and horrible dread, sink my spirits: to think how holy and upright, how pure and sincere, all our intentions and behaviour ought to be, since we do every thing in the sight of our Judge; a Judge on whom no disguise can impose, but who does not only see our actions, but perfectly discern our most secret thoughts.

## MEDITATION XLVIII.

*The Weakness of Human Nature and Need of Divine Grace.*

O Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, whose eyes are upon all the ways of the sons of men, from the very instant of their entrance into this world, to that of their departure out of it, that thou mayest render to every man according to his doings; bring me, I beseech thee, acquainted with myself, that I may be truly sensible of my weakness and my wants: I have indeed presumed to say, but they were but vain boasts, that I was rich, and stood in need of nothing; while, alas! I was poor and blind, and naked, and miserable, and weak. Thus I thought myself something, when in truth I was nothing; and professing myself to be wise, I became a fool; I arrogated the little good I had to my own wisdom and diligence, but thou hast undeceived my partial mistakes, and convinced me now effectually, that every excellence is entirely thy gift, that without thee we can do nothing; and as the Psalmist well observes, except thou, Lord, art pleased to keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Thou hast taught me experimentally, of how little significance are human strength and industry, by leaving me for a while destitute of thy help, and bringing my supposed abilities to the proof; not for thy better information, who knowest me perfectly before, but in order to the creating in me right views of myself, and abating that unjust

esteem I entertained for qualifications not yet understood. For it is true, my God, I did not only think myself something, but that my being so, was owing to myself, and that my own strength was security sufficient; nor did I discover that my safety was the effect of thy guidance and protection, till thou thoughtest fit to withdraw thyself for a season, and sufferedst me to fall for want of thy support. By this event, alas! I had but too sensible and too sad a demonstration, that all I did commendably before was the effect of thy gracious governance; that my misery and my fall were properly my own; but my recovery and my standing, thine and only thy doing.

Thus hast thou in mercy opened my eyes, and awakened me out of my deceitful dream, by letting me see, that man is appointed to a state of warfare upon earth, that dangers and temptations beset him every where, that no flesh can have whereof to glory before God, in hope to be justified in the sight of their almighty Judge; since whatever good thing we have to do, be the proportion less or more, still the whole is thy gift, and nothing truly our own but our sins and our miseries. And what shall man then find to glory of? Of his sins and miseries? That were most absurd, a cause of shame and sorrow, but none for boasting or self-satisfaction. What then? of any good? No, not that neither; for this is equally absurd, to glory of that which is not our own, but another's. For thine, O Lord, is all the good, and consequently thine all the glory. He that assumes to himself the honour of the good that is thine, the same is a thief and a robber; and thus far resembles the devil himself, that he would usurp upon the majesty and

property of his Master. He that is ambitious of praise for thy gifts, and aims not at promoting thy honour, but his own, how profuse soever men may be in their commendations of him, yet thou wilt be sure to reproach and condemn him for his arrogance and injustice. And what shall the praise of men then profit him? For though they extol never so much, yet if thou disapprove, they shall not be able to defend him when thou sittest in judgment, nor to deliver him from vengeance, when thy awful voice shall pass the fatal sentence upon him.

Therefore, O Lord, who hast formed and sustained me from my mother's womb, suffer me not, I implore thee, to fall under that condemnation, of attempting to steal away any part of thy glory. Thine is all the good, and fit it is that thine should be all the honour of it. To me belongs only confusion of face, and misery unspeakable; for mine is all the evil, and of that evil this must be the consequence, unless thy mercy interpose and rescue me. But thou, my Lord, wilt have mercy; thy mercy extends to all thy works, and thou hatest nothing that thou hast made; thou impartest to us of thy own goodness, and enrichest us with many excellent gifts; having declared thyself a lover of the poor, and a provider for their necessities out of thy hid treasures. Behold we are poor, we are thy needy children, thy little flock; open to us thy gates, that the poor may eat and be satisfied, and the heart of them that seek thee, may praise thee and live for ever. For I am taught, that none but they who see, and acknowledge, and lament their poverty, shall be enriched by thee; while the rich and great in their own conceits, (who are in reality the least and most wretchedly indigent of all others)

shall be sent empty away, and left to perish in their supposed sufficiency.

In a due sense of this dispensation, I most humbly confess my spiritual poverty; that I have nothing of my own; and, if any good action have been done by me, the honour of it is entirely thine, because the good itself was thy gift. I do look upon myself to be no better than vanity, a mass of corruption, a dark and empty creature, a barren soil, not able, without the fructifying dew of thy blessing, to bring forth any fruit, but the venomous and noisome weeds of shame, and sin, and death. If I have any good disposition, it is of thy infusing; if I have persevered in doing well, it is because thy strength enabled me; if I fell off from a good course, it was because I grieved thy Holy Spirit: and in each of those relapses I had lain and been lost for ever, had not thy mighty hand raised me out of that dust of death. Thy light alone delivered me from blindness, thy defence from temptations, thy support from relapses, and thy continual governance from final misery and ruin irrecoverable.

Thus hath thy goodness, O my God, prevented me in all the events and exigencies of my life: rescuing me out of past evils, sustaining and defending me against the present, and arming me against the future. Hewing in pieces the nets and snares laid to entrap my soul, and taking out of the way the occasions and allurements to sin, which hadst thou not done for me, there is not in the world a crime so black, but I might have been guilty of it. For this I know, O Lord, that there is no sin ever committed by any one man, which any other man is not capable of committing too, if that almighty power which made him man, be not at hand with

its assistance. But what I could not do for myself, thou hast vouchsafed in much mercy to do for me: thou laidst upon me thy commands, and didst signify what I ought to abstain from: thou gavest to these commands the sanction of promises and threatenings, and to thy grace alone I ascribe my believing the one and the other. Thou hast governed and preserved me to thee and to myself; and by thy seasonable and happy restraints, I have been kept from adultery, murder, blasphemy, and every heinous violation of thy laws, which otherwise had provoked thy displeasure, and certainly incurred my own damnation.

Sometimes there was no tempter to persuade me to do amiss; and that there was no such at hand, was the effect of thy merciful providence. At other times the tempter was ready, and had done his part, but for want of fit time and place, the temptation could not take effect: this also was from the same good providence. At others, he laid the bait, place was convenient, opportunity was inviting, and then, by thy restraining grace, I was withheld from complying with his black and deceitful allurements. Sometimes he made his approaches in the dark, black and loathsome as he is; and thy assistance enabled me to discover and detest his deformities. Sometimes the strong man armed attacked me with open force, and hoped to carry me by terror and storm; and in these conflicts thou hast so powerfully restrained him, and strengthened me, that I have not only stood the shock, but come off conqueror. Sometimes he hath accosted me in a bright and beautiful figure, and transformed himself into an angel of light; and thou hast rebuked him, and opened my eyes in time to detect his borrowed dis-

guises. For this is he, who goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour. And devour he certainly will, except thou, the great shepherd of souls, deliver the prey out of his hungry jaws. And who can defend himself from his greedy ravenings, except thou, Lord, deliver him, who breakest the heads of the great dragon! Do thou therefore help and protect us, hide us under the shadow of thy wings, and shield us from the force of the monster's power. For this is his constant employment, this his only desire and endeavour, to destroy and swallow up the souls which thou hast made.

To thee therefore our God, we flee; to thee we cry for defence against our daily and our deadly foe; who, whether we sleep or wake, whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we are employed about, is night and day making war against us, by cunning stratagems and a thousand inconceivable arts of delusion. Sometimes in open field, sometimes from private ambuscades aiming his poisoned darts at us, that he may slay our souls. And yet, so wretchedly stupid, so perversely mad are we, that though we know and see this fierce dragon is ever making at us with open mouth, still we can fold our hands to sleep, indulge ourselves in ease and sloth, and wantonly sport upon the brink of ruin, as if no danger threatened us. His constant endeavour is our destruction, and upon this he is so eagerly intent, as never to slumber or sleep: we in the meanwhile sleep secure, and will not so much as be awakened into one serious thought of our chief, our everlasting concern. And what, alas! must needs become at last, of creatures whom the

enemy uses so much industry to destroy, and they so very little to preserve themselves.

For infinite, God knows, are our hazards, and all our way is spread so thick with traps and toils that we cannot tread one step where there is not some net laid for our souls. And whose wisdom and care is sufficient to escape them all? snares in our plenty, and snares in our poverty: Snares in our company, and snares in our most private retirements: snares in our pleasures, and the ordinary refreshments of life, and snares in our very fastings, and most mortifying austerities. Abroad or at home, asleep or awake, we are never safe, but every word and action, every thought and design, is hazardous and ensnaring. Such is our condition, and so manifold our danger. But do thou, Lord, deliver us from the toils of the hunter, that we may give thanks unto thy name, saying with the holy Psalmist, If the Lord himself had not been on our side, our enemies had swallowed us up quick: but praised be the Lord, who hath not given us over as a prey unto their teeth. Our soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken, and we are delivered.

Do thou, O gracious God, my life and light, in order to completing this deliverance, enlighten my eyes, that I may see thy light, and walk in it. For who can escape the snares he does not see? and who can see them, except thou open his eyes, and direct his unwary steps? The prince of darkness works in the dark, and spreads his nets unseen; and the children of darkness fall into them, because destitute of thy light, in which whosoever walketh, walketh safely. For if any man walketh in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this

world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. Now thou, my God, art the light which alone can guide us; thou art the light of the children of light, the day that never declines, and they who walk in thee, tread sure and safe, but they who want thee, are still in the thickest night, and know not whither they go.

This is most manifest from daily experience, that the farther any man wanders from thee, the more he is bewildered in the night of ignorance and error, of sin and confusion; and the more gross the darkness about him is, the less he is capable of discerning his danger; the oftener he is entangled, the deeper he falls, and is not sensible that he does so. And how should he be solicitous to rise again, who does not perceive the necessity of such an attempt, but fondly thinks he stands, even when he falls most desperately? how shall that patient ever find a cure, who hath no apprehension of his disease? So great occasion have I to be importunate with thee, my God, and light, that thou shouldest enlighten my eyes, and show me the true state of my case, that I may see my way, and rightly apprehend my danger, and not be overthrown before my cruel adversaries. For our common enemy intends no less than our utter destruction: he is a robber from the beginning, and such he will continue to the end of the world. But, O thou shepherd of Israel, break in pieces the head of this ravening wolf, let him not tear and devour thy tender lambs, but lead thy flock safely, and conduct them at last to thyself. Thou knowest his goings out, and his coming in, and his rage against us: thou seest through all his cunning disguises, and canst with ease detect his subtilest devices. Nor do I mention these to inform

thee of them, for thou knowest all things, and the secretest imaginations are not hid from thee: but I lament my danger and my own disability, that thou, my Judge, mayest see how sensible I am of both, that thy compassion may come in to my assistance, and disappoint our enemy and thine, and save those souls whose strength thou art alone.

Our enemy is wondrous crafty, and his contrivances are so disguised, that except thou open our eyes, we cannot easily discover what it is he aims at, nor distinguish this deadly foe from a very affectionate friend. He watches all our motions, observes what posture our affairs are in, and accommodates his temptations to the humour, the occasions, the events and fortunes of each person; he considers the times, the places, the critical junctures, in which these are most likely to prevail, and is sure to fall in with those, that are most favourable to his mischievous purposes. He counterfeits melancholy, that he may delude the sorrowful and and dejected; and mirth, that he may betray the sprightly and gay; he wears sheeps' clothing, that he may deceive the secure; and all the savage fierceness of the wolf, that he may terrify the fearful. Thus does he manage matters with such fatal address, that some are scared with terrors by night, and others wounded with the arrows that fly by day, others tainted with the secret pestilence of lusts that walk in darkness, and others destroyed by the open profaneness and impudent vices that waste at noon day. And who is sufficient for these things? What prudence, what caution can be a match for such intricate impostures? Who can discover the face of his garment, or bridle up the teeth of this tyrannical Leviathan?

Behold he hides his arrows secretly in his quiver, and hits us suddenly, when we are least in fear. While he covers his hook with specious baits, and sets his traps out of sight, he draws us into misery and death, by false appearances of happiness, and under the pretence of kindness and friendship: and these things pass upon us very easily, unless thou, Lord, help us to pull off the mask, and detect the slight of hand with which the crafty juggler deludes our credulous sight. Were we in danger only from acknowledged vice, and the works of the flesh, the matter were not so hard to guard ourselves against him. But, alas! he turns our own artillery upon us, and hath a thousand ways of compassing his ends and our destruction, by our very virtues and graces, by our devotions and most spiritual exercises. And this is properly to transform himself into an angel of light, when he makes us ten times more the children of hell, by perverting those very methods which seem to have the most direct tendency to heaven. These, and innumerable other stratagems, to me unknown, this son of Belial finds out, and in some or other of them is perpetually exercising himself to our eternal mischief; but do thou, O Lord, hew the snares of the ungodly in pieces, and let him not triumph over us; let him fall into his own nets, and let me ever escape them; that he may gnash with his teeth, and consume away with envy and rage, at the perishing of his own desires, and thou mayest be glorified in our preservation, O thou who art the Saviour of all that put their trust in thee, thou that savest by thy right hand.

## MEDITATION XLIX.

*Improvement of God's goodness.*

I CALL upon thee for help, O God, with greater confidence upon every remembrance of thy favours already vouchsafed to me. And therefore behold thy servant and son of thy handmaid, acknowledging with all humility, and thankfully recounting the many mercies, with which thou hast prevented, preserved, and particularly blessed me from my youth up to this very day. Herein I exercise myself the rather in a due sense and detestation of ingratitude, a sin so odious in itself, and so very displeasing to thee. For this is the ruin of all that is good: the dam that stops the current of thy mercy, else ever overflowing upon mankind. The seeds of vice though killed, by this revive and sprout up afresh in our hearts, and the most thriving virtues, where this baleful quality enters, are immediately poisoned and stinted, grow sickly, fade away and die. Therefore I will give thanks to my God, that I fall not into this miserable state, nor lie under the dangerous influence and indelible reproach of a sin, so malignant in its quality and effect as that of ingratitude.

O Lord my deliverer! how often hath the roaring lion opened his mouth upon me, and thou hast drawn me from between his teeth, by quashing the temptation! How often have I wickedly complied, and done the fact, and he stood ready to carry off his prey, but thou hast defended me from the hell I

have deserved: thus my offences against thee were repaired by the manifestations of thy power and goodness in the defence of me. I was not afraid, nor stood in awe of thee, and thou didst keep a strict and impregnable guard for my preservation. I departed from thee, and surrendered myself to the enemy: thou wouldest not suffer him to take the advantage, nor me to be ruined; even by my own act and deed. These benefits my gracious God conferred, and yet so blind was I, as not to see them. For after this manner hast thou snatched my soul from him, that would have torn it in pieces, and rescued me from eternal destruction, when I was not in the least sensible how near I was to it. I have ventured to the very brink of the precipice, and thou hast plucked me back when dropping into it. I was at the very gates of death, and thou hast restrained the grave from shutting her mouth upon me.

Nor hath the care of this kind providence been confined only to my soul, my body also hath felt its good effects. For often hast thou, my God and Saviour, restored me from the bed of languishing, healed those diseases which had baffled all human skill, preserved and protected me by sea and land, in perils of fire and sword, shielding me from many a sore thrust, and putting by deaths innumerable, which were levelled at my head: standing over, and covering me with the shadow of thy wings, from all manner of hurt and danger. And this thou didst, as I have reason to believe, in great compassion to my poor soul, considering how unprovided I was for so important a change; and that, had I been then hurried out of the world, hell and eternal misery must have been my portion. So that

thy grace and mercy, thus preventing me, have rescued me from a two-fold death, and secured body and soul at once, by the same suspension of the fatal stroke; and by thus lengthening out my life, laid a foundation for my living to all eternity. These, and many other benefits I have received at thy bounteous hand, and I, stupid wretch, regarded not; nay, was so blind as not to see them, till the light from above opened my eyes. But now, thou God of my life, by whom I live; thou light of my eyes, by which I see; I have received the influence of thy bright beams, and am brought to a due sight and sense of thee and thy goodness; and most heartily return my thanks the best I can, though most disproportionate to the mercies for which they are due. For thou only art my God and most merciful Creator, a lover of souls, and hating nothing that thou hast made: and I, alas! with shame confess myself the chief of sinners, in whom thou hast shown all long-suffering for a pattern to them, whose sinful and miserable state shall hereafter render them objects of thy clemency and compassion.

I acknowledge thy mercies to be unspeakably great, for delivering my soul from the nethermost hell; not once, or twice, or thrice, but hundreds, and thousands, and millions of times. I was perpetually driven thither, and thou as constantly checking my furious career, and turning me back again. And had not thy own goodness loved me better than I loved myself, thou hadst, ere this, sunk me into the bottomless pit ten thousand times over. But such is thy tenderness, that thou wilt not suffer us to undo ourselves, and makest as though thou sawest not our offences, that thy forbearance

may win us to repentance. So full of mercy are all thy ways, O God: which I now plainly perceive, and have a deep and grateful sense of, and am even lost in wonder and amazement, at the kindness which hath all along watched over me for good, and saved both body and soul from the death which had otherwise long since swallowed them up. For I was entirely in the hands of death, and thou restoredst me entire to life. Thine therefore be the whole of this which lives by thy clemency, and every part of me conspires in offering every part of me, a sacrifice of praise. This whole spirit, and soul, and body, and all that life resulting from the mutual union of these, shall from henceforth be consecrated to the God of my life: for thou restoredst me all, that thou mightest keep me all for thy own: and therefore I will love my strength and my deliverer, and live no longer to myself, but thee. The whole of my life was lost and gone in misery, the whole was restored and given me afresh by thy mercy: for thou art a God full of compassion, long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth, and showing mercy unto thousands in them that love thy name.

Now at length, O Lord my God, I plainly perceive the equity of that command, which enjoins me to love thee with all my heart, and with all my mind, and with all my soul, and with all my strength, at all times, with a most ardent and never-ceasing affection: because I should perish each moment, didst thou not renew the gift of life by thy preservation and continuance of it, and every moment thou bindest me faster to thee, by the addition of new, and repetition of former benefits. As therefore no hour, no minute passes by, without some

instance of thy bounty, so it is fit that none should pass, without my grateful and affectionate remembrances of so kind a benefactor, without such zealous and constant love of so good a God, as my frail nature, and narrow soul can extend to. This is indeed what ought to be, but yet it is what will not, cannot be, unless the same hand give the grace of gratitude, which gives the obligations to the duty: for every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from above, and is from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of thee who showest mercy, that I must be enabled to love thee. Thine, Lord, is this gift, as thine is every thing that is good. Thou commandest that I should love thee, grant me the power to do whatsoever thou commandest, and then command whatsoever thou pleasest.

But still the more I reflect on thee, and on myself, the greater occasion I find to ask again and again, how is it possible for me to love thee to the degree that I ought, or where I shall meet with words to express the engagements I have to do so? If I look back to the first production of my nature, the several privileges, by which thou hast distinguished mankind from all his fellow-creatures here below, are not only highly valuable, but even astonishing marks of thy favour. The honour of being formed after thy own image, those characters of the Divine excellences impressed upon the noble faculties of my soul, setting me far above the vegetable and merely sensible world, and approaching to the dignity of those intellectual spirits above, the angels that minister about thy throne, and are

allowed to partake in the glories of thy beauteous presence; the ample provisions made for our convenience and delight, and that dominion man was invested with over the works of thy hands in these regions about him.

And what can I suppose thy wisdom designed by putting all things in subjection to the will of man, but to teach him, that his subjection was reserved to thee alone; that he should devote himself entirely to thy service, whom so many other things were ordained to serve? For in this order the creation seems plainly to proceed. The things without us were framed for the use of our body, the body for the soul, the soul for thee: that, being freed from the distraction of serving any thing besides, thou mightest remain the only proper object of its care, while it possesses thee for its joy and happiness, and ultimate end, and creatures of a lower rank for its comfort and convenience, as means tending to the attainment of that end. For all contained within the compass of those bright orbs above us, are in their own nature, and in thy purpose, inferior to the human soul, and made subservient to that. But this was made so far like them, as to be subservient to some good above it too, that it might serve and grasp at that, and possess that which it would be exquisitely happy in the enjoyment of. And if it gets above the mean affections of such mutable things as are unworthy of its chief concern, and fix its thoughts and desires on thee alone, it shall advance to a nearer resemblance of that Supreme Perfection, whose likeness it wears, and be admitted to a clear vision of the Divine Majesty in immortal bliss. Then shall it be possessed securely of all those precious and inestimable

treasures in the house of its Lord, with which, if all we see, and use to be fond of here, are put into the balance, they will be found altogether deceitful upon the weights, and lighter than even vanity itself. These are the glories which thou wilt one day confer upon redeemed souls; and in the meanwhile, by the prospect of them, thou dost support and fill thy saints with joy and comfort inexpressible.

Such large designs of happiness and glory might rather be thought just matter of wonder than of belief and expectation, were it not that in doing so much honour to man, thou dost it to thyself; and exaltest thy own likeness and copy, by receiving it into this union with its Divine original. Nor can I suffer myself to doubt, that any measure of kindness will be thought too great for the soul, when I reflect how much thou hast already shown to this corruptible and viler part of us, the body: for even to every sense and organ of this thy liberality is admirable. The sun and moon are daily in attendance, and (in obedience to thy wise appointment) serve thy children by fixed and regular successions of heat and cold, of light and darkness. The brightness of the heavens thou hast given for an entertainment to our sight; the pure and subtle air for liberty of breathing; the difference of harmonious sounds to charm our ears; the fragrant perfumes to feast our smell: variety of relishes for our taste; and the tactile qualities of bodies to exercise our touch. Cattle of several sorts to assist us in our toils, and lighten the labour of supporting life; fowls of the air, fishes of the sea, and fruits of the earth, for our sustenance and refreshment: plants and minerals, whose healing virtues may

relieve the pains and distempers we are subject to; and though thy wisdom hath thought fit to leave us liable to many and grievous bodily sufferings, yet thou hast furnished us with proper remedies to assuage or remove each of them. Such is the pity and love of Him who made us, and who knows our frame: the almighty Potter, in whose hand we are the clay, thus taking care to preserve the brittle vessels he hath made.

But while I am thus endeavouring to beget in my soul worthy apprehensions of thy bounteous mercy, pour, I beseech thee from above, the light of thy grace, which may enlarge the prospect, and from these little things below, get above the objects and the comforts of sense; help me to make a right judgment of the great, the invisible above, which our great Creator hath prepared for our immortal spirits: for if my God be so solicitous for a thing so mean, and of so short and perishing a nature as this mortal body; if the heavens and the air, seas and land, light and darkness, scorching heats and refreshing shades; if showers and dew, winds and storms, fowls and fishes, beasts and vegetables; if herbs and trees, the artful and the voluntary productions of the earth, do all conspire to serve us, and so assiduously perform their part to entertain us with a variety, that may render life not only supportable, but even delightful—what are the comforts, what the entertainments? how great, how rich, how innumerable, how inconceivable, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee, in that heavenly country where they shall behold thee face to face? If such provision be made for us in our prison, what may we expect to find in our palace?

Great and marvellous are thy works, O King of heaven: for since all those things are exceeding pleasant and good, which thou hast imparted to good and evil men in common, how much better must we suppose those to be, which thou hast reserved as the portion peculiar to the good only? If thy gifts are so many, and so various, in which at present thy enemies, as well as thy friends, have a share, how noble, and how immeasurable, how attractive and charming must those needs be, of which none but thy friends are thought worthy to partake? If in our day of mourning there are so many comforts afforded us, what shall be our joys in the day of our nuptials? If our dungeon and our exile have so many refreshments, what shall be the felicities of our own home, the native soil of our souls, the magnificent court of the King of heaven? Surely, my God, no eye hath seen, or can see the things thou hast prepared for thy faithful and beloved, unless thou who hast prepared, do also vouchsafe to reveal them. For as is thy majesty, so is thy mercy, and infinite is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, infinite as thy own essential happiness, and the inexhaustible multitude of thy mercies.

For thou, O Lord, art great, incomprehensibly great; thy power knows no bounds, thy wisdom no number, thy kindness no measure; neither do thy rewards and gracious gifts, which are in every respect worthy of, and of an extent equal to thyself. They must be so because thou thyself art the reward of thy saints, the hope of them that combat in this spiritual warfare, the crown of them that strive lawfully, and the joy and triumph of them that conquer.

## MEDITATION L.

*God's Goodness, our hope in Sufferings.*

These, O my God, are the many, the mighty benefits, with which thou one day hast decreed to satisfy the wants and cravings of thy needy children. For thou art the hope of them, whom all other hopes have forsaken. Thou art the crown of glory which shall adorn every head that overcometh. Thou the eternal fulness of those blessed souls who hunger and thirst after thy righteousness and kingdom. Thou the never-failing comfort, communicating thyself to none but such as are content to forego, nay have learnt to despise all worldly comforts in order to obtain thy everlasting and spiritual one in exchange. For they who set up their rest, and seek their satisfactions here, are reputed unworthy of those, thou hast reserved for thine elect hereafter. But they who are tormented here, are comforted hereafter; and such as bear a part in the sufferings, shall not fail to obtain a share in the consolations, of their Lord and Saviour. For matters are so ordered by thy wisdom, that no man can have his joys and consolations here and hereafter both; God and mammon cannot both be served; to divide ourselves between them, is to lose all pretence of reward from either; and heaven and the world, spiritual and temporal, are objects so distant, things so incompatible, that he who resolves in good earnest to enjoy the one, is unavoidably obliged to give up all his pretensions to the other.

Upon these considerations my soul refuses to be comforted, and to find her happiness in this life, and rather chooses and begs of thee, my Lord and comforter, that these may be reserved for her future and eternal state. Acknowledging it most equitable, that every one should lose thee, who prefers any other thing before thee. And therefore I make it my most earnest request, that thou wilt not suffer me to take up with any treacherous empty comforts, such as desert me when I stand in need of them: but rather give me a general disgust, and make all things besides bitter and loathsome to me, that my soul may delight itself in nothing but my God, whose excellences sweeten the bitterest afflictions that can possibly befall man in this valley of tears and trouble.

Transported with the ravishing foretaste of this bliss, the first martyr St. Stephen, received the showers of stones poured on him by his murderers with triumph. The Apostles departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. St. Andrew marched to his crucifixion without the least regret, because advancing to the possession of this bliss. The two great Apostles submitted cheerfully to death, St. Peter by the cross, St. Paul by the sword. St. Bartholomew thought he made a prudent bargain when flayed alive, to purchase this with his skin. St. John drank up the poisoned cup without the least signs of fear. St. Peter long before, upon a taste of this unspeakable delight, cried out, it is good for us to be here: we ask no other happiness. Such mighty efficacy had a drop of this sweetness to create a disrelish of all other pleasures: and what can we suppose would

have been the transports of his soul, could he, while in the body, have drunk the fulness of thy cup overflowing with delights unspeakable? Some such antepast we may imagine vouchsafed to David when he cried out with holy zeal, O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that seek thee! and again, O taste and see how gracious the Lord is! This is the blessedness we live in hope of: this we firmly believe thy bounty will one day bestow upon us; for this we fight under our Lord's banner against sin, the world, and the devil; for the sake of this we are content to be killed all the day long, in assurance that in thee, our life, we shall live for ever.

But, O thou hope of Israel, and desire of my heart, after which I pant night and day, make haste and tarry not. Arise and come, and bring us out of prison, that we may give thanks unto thy name, and rejoice in the light of thy countenance. Let thine ears be open to the prayers of thy desolate orphans, and hold not thy peace at their tears; they cry to thee for their daily bread, that, by the strength of that they may be sustained in their travels, and happily conducted to the wished-for end of their journey, even to thy holy mountain. Among these, I, the least and most unworthy to be called thy son, lift up my heart and voice, confessing that I have no right to cry to my heavenly Father, nor any desert which might challenge admittance into thy house; but begging notwithstanding for thy own mercies' sake what nothing else can justify my asking, even that thy servant may not be confounded, which puts his trust in thee: for who shall enter into thy sanctuary, there to behold thy power and glory, unless thou open to him? And

if thou open, who shall shut? If thou break down it cannot be built again: and if thou shut up, there can be no opening. If thou withhold the waters they dry up, and if thou send them out, they overturn the earth. If thou cut off, and command all that thou hast made back into nothing again, who shall control or hinder thee? Such is thy power, and no less is thy mercy, extending to every thing to which thou givest being. And therefore we beseech thee, remember that we are a part of the world framed by thee, and preserve thy own workmanship. Vile earth though we are, thou art our Maker, despise not the vessels of thy own moulding. Ashes and worms cannot indeed aspire to the blissful regions of eternity; but that power, which made all things out of nothing, can find no difficulty in exalting even such as we are thither; and that goodness, which moved thee to make them, is sufficient to prevail for making even thus happy, the creatures which thou wouldest not have made, hadst thou not intended that they should be happy.

In this alone it is that I place my hope. For I will not trust in my bow, it is not my sword that shall help me; but thy right hand and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hast favour to thy own handy work. Thou knowest our frame and temper, that we are all as a leaf that withereth, our life a blast and vapour upon earth, and every man living altogether vanity. And these reflections give us confidence, that we shall find compassion for our frailties. For will the God of matchless strength exert his power against dry stubble, driven about by every gust of wind? Will the king of Israel hunt a dog or a flea? We have heard largely of thy mercy, O Lord, that thou didst not

create death, neither hast pleasure in the destruction of the living, nor in the death of him that dieth by his own perverse choice. Suffer not, therefore, we beseech thee, that which thou never madest, to have dominion over the creatures which thou didst make. For if thou art grieved at our destruction, what can obstruct thy finding joy in our life and salvation? If thou wilt, thou canst save me, but I am not able without thee to save myself, though I would never so fain: For the number of my miseries is very great, and their weight lies heavy upon me.

To will indeed is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. Nay, even to will that good is not in my disposal, and even what I have the power to do, I sometimes find not the inclination to do, except thou grant my petition, that thy will may be done in earth as it is in heaven. And what I would and could do, I know not how to set about, unless thy wisdom show the way, and enlighten my eyes, that I may discern and walk in it. Nay, farther yet, although I know my duty, and have the will and ability sometimes to discharge it, yet all my knowledge is vain and imperfect, unless thy true wisdom, which descendeth from above, render my knowledge active and effectual. For to thy will every thing is possible, and nothing can resist the great Lord of all. Let then thy will be done in us, upon whom thy name is called, that this noble creature perish not, which thou hast formed for the manifestation of thy own glory. For what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death, or who can deliver his soul from the hand of hell, unless thou please to work out his de-

liverance, who art alone that source of life, by whose life-giving influence all things live?

I have already ascribed my strength to thee, and with the most sincere humility, confessed that I did formerly trust in my own strength, which upon trial proved no better than weakness. When in this mistaken persuasion I attempted to run, I fell where I thought myself most able to stand. I stumbled and went backwards, and the prize I aimed at fled farther from me, when I thought myself making most directly up to it. Thus hast thou, by many disappointments of my vain confidence, brought me to a true sight of my own impotent condition. And by these dispensations I was instructed, when that appeared least of all in my power, which I imagined most easy to be compassed, without any succours from abroad. How often have I boasted, that I would attempt this, or perform that good action, and neither performed, nor so much as attempted either? How often was my will not seconded by power? How often hath my power lost all its efficacy for want of the will to employ? And whence all this, but want of looking up to him, from whence both the will and the power of doing good is derived, and thinking myself absolute master of both, when in truth I was so of neither?

But, being now brought to a better sense, I acknowledge before thee, my God and Father, that by his own proper strength no man shall prevail, and that it is but a folly and vain presumption, when any flesh glories in thy presence. For it is not in man alone to will the good he can do, nor to perform the good he would do, no, nor to know the good he would or could do, but all their steps are

guided by thee. Theirs, I say, who are duly persuaded, that it is not by themselves, but by thee, that they are conducted in the ways of holiness and salvation. Wherefore we most earnestly implore thee by the bowels of thy tender mercies, that thou wilt save the creatures thou hast made. For if thou wilt, thou canst do it; and upon thy will to do it, depends the strength of our hopes, and the certainty of our salvation.

Call then to remembrance those tender mercies which have been ever of old, and finish that goodness in its utmost perfection, with the blessings whereof thou hast prevented me from the beginning. Well may I say, thou hast prevented me. For, long before this son of thy handmaid was born, thou didst prepare the way, wherein I should go, and by it be led to the glories of thy house. Before thou hadst formed me in the womb thou knewest me, and hadst determined all thy good pleasure concerning me; and ever since I was born, I have been holden up by thee, my God and my hope, even from my mother's breasts.

For such is thy comprehensive and unchangeable knowledge, that what I now expect thousands of years to come, in thy eternal purpose is fixed and done already: and, although with regard to the event it be still future, yet in thy foresight it is already passed beyond the possibility of alteration. What this is, so far as I am concerned, stands indeed entered in thy book; but I, who know not what thou hast determined, am full of fear and jealousies. The vast variety of dangers that threaten me on every side; the troops of enemies combined against my life, the numberless miseries that obstruct and intercept my course; these

fill my soul with such perplexity and dread, that wert not thou my assistance and support I should be lost and sunk into despair.

But my hope is great in thee, my most merciful King and my God, and in the multitude of the sorrows which I have in my heart, thy comforts refresh my soul. The signal marks of thy goodness, even before I was born, in making such provisions for my happiness; the many more which have followed me since, and been particular to me, besides those common to other men; these all forbid me to distrust, nay, they engage me to be very confident, that the past demonstrations of thy love, are pledges and earnests of more and better blessings in reserve; that so much done on my behalf already, was never intended to be lost; but what thou hast begun thou wilt graciously finish, and grant me in thy own due time to see the felicity of thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of thy people, and give thanks with thine inheritance.

Why should I not believe and hope all this? Or how indeed can I do otherwise, when these glorious instances of thy favour and love occur to my thoughts, so often but never too often mentioned, O my love and only delight? Whom I love because thou first lovedst me; and provedst it by those precious evidences of creating me like thyself, preferring me in honour above thy other creatures, and instructing me how to keep up the dignity of my character, which is then only preserved, when I know and serve thee, for whose use and glory I was made.

The same large expectations are farther cherished by one reflection more, that of thy angels being made ministering spirits for me, and having

a charge given them over me, to keep me in all my ways, lest at any time I hurt my foot against a stone. These are the guards, the shining sentinels upon the new Jerusalem, and thy mountains round about her; keeping watch over thy flock night and day, lest our adversary the devil, should at any time surprise weak and unwary souls, and tear them in pieces like a lion, while there is none to help. These are the denizens of that blessed city above, which is mother of us all, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation, that they may support and conduct them safely; and who constantly behold the face of their Father in heaven, who hath committed his little ones to their care.

And great is their affection towards their fellow-citizens, as the persons in whom they hope to see the breaches of their own order one day repaired. Hence are they so wakeful and solicitous about us, so ready to relieve us at every time and place, supplying our wants, and going diligently upon despatches between us and thee, our common Lord. Attending upon our devotions, presenting our requests before the throne of grace, and from thence conveying down to us the blessings we desire. These bright attendants always keep us company, go in and out with us; observe how holily, how decently, we behave ourselves in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; with what earnest zeal we seek thy kingdom, and the righteousness thereof; with what fear and trembling we serve the Majesty on high, and with what pious raptures our hearts are transported at thy goodness. They assist us in our labours, watch over us in our beds, encourage us in our conflicts, crown us in our con-

quests, rejoice with them that rejoice, provided they rejoice in thee, and mourn with them that mourn, when their sorrows and sufferings are for thy sake.

O how vigilant is their care! O how fervent their affection! and all this for the magnifying that inestimable love, wherewith thou hast vouchsafed to love us. For they love whom thou lovest, keep them whom thou keepest, and forsake them whom thou forsakest. They love not the wicked, because thou hatest all the workers of iniquity, and abhorrest them that speak lies. When we do well, the angels rejoice, and the devils are grieved: when we go astray, we bring joy to devils, and defraud the angels of that joy we owe them. For there is joy in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth; and triumph in hell over one righteous man that relapseth into sin. Do thou, therefore, gracious Father, enlarge thy angels' joy; and furnish matter for it daily more and more, that thou mayest be glorified in our obedience, and we may be brought with them into thy one fold, to give thanks for ever to thy holy name, O Almighty Maker of angels and men.

These benefits I gratefully commemorate, and admire the greatness of that love, which gave thy holy angels for ministering spirits to us. Thou hadst given all things under heaven for our use and service, and as if thou thoughtest all this too little, thou hast given us the inhabitants of heaven itself, for the same gracious purposes. Let thy angels, O Lord, praise thee; let all thy works render thanks unto thee, and let thy saints for ever bless thee, for this mighty favour. O God, our glory, how hast thou honoured, how hast thou enriched, how highly hast thou exalted and ennobled us with thy mani-

fold and marvellous gifts! how excellent, how wonderful is thy name, O Lord, in all the world; thou that hast set not only thine, but our glory above the heavens! Lord what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest thus set thy heart upon him? Thus hast thou eminently verified thy own word, that thy delight is with the children of men. But is not man corruption, and the son of man a worm? Is not every man living altogether vanity? Yet dost thou, by a most astonishing condescension, open thine eyes upon such a one as this, and bring him into judgment with thee.

## MEDITATION LI.

*The Methods of God's Grace.*

Teach me, thou unfathomable abyss, thou wisdom, by which the world was framed, which hast weighed the mountains in scales, and hanged the vast globe of the earth in a balance; weigh up, I beseech thee, this heavy mass of body by thy invisible power, and raise it nearer to thyself, that I may discern and know how wonderful thou art in all the world. O Light! antecedent to, and productive of all other light, whose brightness shined alone on the everlasting hills, and to whom all things lay naked and open, even before they were made; whose purity abhors the least blemish: what pleasure canst thou take in man? What fellowship can light so clear have with darkness so gross? Or where is it, that thou hast prepared a sanctuary in me, fit for so glorious and holy a majesty to enter and dwell, and take delight therein? The Spirit, by whose sanctifying graces all things are cleansed, which cannot be seen by any, much less be possessed by any, but the pure in heart, will not certainly lodge in any but clean habitations.

And is it possible to find in man a place fit to receive thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Who indeed, but he, whose very essence is purity? For that which is unclean itself cannot cleanse any other thing. And this was especially signified to our forefathers, the Jews, in the law given from a mountain burning with fire, and out

of a cloud and thick darkness, by which it was ordained, that whosoever was touched by a person under legal uncleanness, should be reputed from that contract unclean. And such, alas! are we all: even the very best of us polluted; conceived, and born in corruption; and carrying the marks of our impurity so visible, so foul, that it is to no purpose to attempt the concealing our blemishes from thy all-seeing eyes: unless thou, therefore, who alone art pure, vouchsafe to sanctify us, we never can be clean. And this mercy thou dost vouchsafe to those among the sons of men, in whom thou condescendest to dwell. These thou hast called and chosen out of the world, justified in the world, and wilt exalt and glorify them when the world shall be no more.

Those whom thy love hath chosen to be holy temples for thy majesty, thou cleansest by thy Spirit, and sanctifiest with the washing of water by thy word. Their names and numbers are exactly known to thee, who countest the number of the stars, and callest them all by their names: these happy men are written in the book of life, and so preserved by thy power, through faith unto salvation, that all things, even their own faults and frailties, work together for good to them. Though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, because thou upholdest them with thy hand. Thou keepest all their bones, so that not one of them is broken.

But dismal and most dreadful is the end of sinners, whose names and crimes are likewise known to thee, who tellest the sands of the sea, and soundest the great deep. These for their manifold and obstinate offences, thou givest up to their own hearts' lusts, and lettest them follow their own

imaginations. And when they are thus permitted to perish in their folly, all things work together for their hurt, and the very prayer of the wicked is turned into sin. Insomuch, that what promising appearances soever they make, yet all at last is blasted, and comes to nothing; and even such as seem to have set their nest in the stars, are brought down, and cast out as dung upon the face of the earth.

Great and marvellous are these thy counsels, O most worthy Judge Eternal, who sittest in the throne of equity, and bringest to pass things deep and unsearchable. And well may these strike terror through every part of me, since man, during this mortal state cannot attain to perfect security, but is still left exposed to temptation and danger, that he may accomplish his warfare with the greater circumspection, serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life with fear, and rejoice unto thee with reverence. That his obedience may be preserved by awe, and his joy tempered with humility and trembling; that he who girdeth on his armour should not boast himself, as he that putteth it off; nor any flesh glory in thy presence, but rather fear and humble itself before thy Majesty, when all are kept in this profitable ignorance of what may befal them in their latter end; and cannot make a judgment of thy love or hatred, or sing songs of triumph to their souls, till all the hazards of the fight be over.

How many have our own eyes seen, how many more have we heard of, (which yet I never see, or hear, or recollect, without great impression) who have been long renowned for conspicuous patterns of heroic virtue, and such as seemed, if any could

do so absolutely, to have made their calling and election sure, and yet upon some trying emergency, even these men have been vanquished and ensnared, and so entirely lost, not only to the practice, but by degrees to the very principle of goodness, as to wallow and be hardened past all feeling in the most enormous and scandalous sins. Such are the stars of heaven struck down to the earth, with a sweep of the dragon's tail. How many on the other hand (which sustains me with comfort) who have lain grovelling in dust and filth, profligate and ignorant, as well as averse to all goodness, yet even these abandoned wretches thou hast wonderfully raised, when they seemed to be just sinking into hell. Thus may we frequently observe the living die unexpectedly, and the dead in trespasses and sins, as much to our surprise, raised to a life of righteousness and hope: light clouded over with darkness, and darkness breaking forth into marvellous light. Publicans and harlots seizing heaven by violence, and the children of the kingdom cast into utter darkness.

And whence all this, but because they ascended into that mountain of pride into which the first pattern of disobedience went up an angel, but came down a devil? whereas the meek and humble are the persons chosen and called, sanctified and built up a meet habitation for the majesty of the great God, through the Spirit of his grace. With these thou enjoyest holy and chaste delights: dwelling in their hearts by thy presence, and making them thy temple, which is the highest honour our human nature is capable of.

For this soul of ours, which thou hast created by thy word, though not of thy own substance; nor

yet of any elementary matter, but out of nothing: this rational, intellectual, and spiritual being, ever living, and ever in motion, (upon which thou hast impressed thy likeness, and consecrated it to thyself by the laver of regeneration) is put into a capacity of receiving thy Divine Majesty, and so contrived, as to be filled with thee, and nothing else but thee. When it is in possession of thee its desires are satisfied, and nothing besides remains an object of its wishes. But while it continues to desire any external object, it manifestly betrays the want of thee within; because when thou art there it seeks for nothing beyond thee.

For since thou art the supreme and universal good, in thee possessing all things, it cannot want any thing that is good. But if it do not desire that which is the sum of all good, some other good will necessarily be sought after, because it hath not yet attained to all, nor yet to the chief good, and aims at the possession of the creature rather than the Creator. And so long as the creature is the object of its desires, those desires are never to be satisfied; for some fresh thing is ever presenting itself, and the soul still remains empty and discontented, because out of its element, and destitute of its proper happiness. For nothing is so, but the utmost perfection it is qualified for, and such alone is that blessed Original, after whose image it was made at first. Now thou art pleased thus to communicate thyself only to such, who desire nothing but thee. Such thou makest holy, as thou art holy, pure and worthy of thee such esteemest thy friends, who counting all things but as dross and dung, propose no other end, no other bliss but to gain thee alone.

And this is the blessedness, which thy mercy hath bestowed upon man: this is the honour, with which thou hast distinguished thy favoured creature, and exalted him far above the rest of the works of thy hands. And now, O Lord, at length I have found out the place where the great, the good, the mighty God is pleased to dwell. Even in that soul which thou hast formed into a resemblance of thy own excellences; which seeks, and loves, and longs for thee alone; but not in that, which divides its affections, and either loves thee, and desires thee not, or loves and longs for other things besides thee.

## MEDITATION LII.

*The Knowledge of God.*

I HAVE gone astray like a sheep that was lost, seeking thee with great anxiety without, when yet thou art within, and dwellest in my soul, if it desire thy presence. I wandered about the villages and streets of the city of this world, inquiring for thee every where, and found thee not; because I expected to meet that abroad, which all the while I had at home. I sent my messengers into all quarters, and charged my bodily senses to make strict search, and bring back a true report, but all to no purpose; because I took a wrong method, and employed those who were not qualified for the discovery. This error I now perceive, because thou hast enlightened and showed me the right way; for though thou art within me, yet none of these sentinels could give any account how thou camest thither.

My eyes declare if God have no colour, he came not in at those doors; my ears, if he made no noise, did not pass this way; my nose, if he did not affect the smell, he entered not by me; my palate, if he have no taste, he could not enter here; my touch, if he be not a bodily substance, I can give no account of him. These qualities then do not belong to thee, my God, because I am not conscious of any such impressions upon thy approach. For thou hast not the form of a body, nor the whiteness of light, nor the sparkling of precious stones, nor the

harmony of music, nor the fragrancy of flowers, or ointments, or spices, nor the delicious taste of honey, nor the charms of those things that are pleasant to the touch, nor any other qualities by which our senses are entertained. When I seek after God, I pursue a happiness very different from all these; for to suppose him such a being, as even brutes are capable of feeling with the organs of sense, were to think most unworthily, most absurdly of him.

And yet I cannot but acknowledge, that in God I expect to find a certain light above all other light, too bright for mortal eyes to behold; a powerful voice above all other voices, too strong for any ear to hear; a sweetness above all other sweets, too exquisite for any taste to relish. A light shining without being confined by any determined space; a voice sounding without losing itself in air; a fragrant perfume without the assistance of winds to waste it. Such is my God, and there is none that can be compared unto him: and such is the object, which my soul loves and longs after.

And too late it was, that I set my heart upon thee, O my beloved, whose beauty was from everlasting, and yet is always new and blooming. Too long did I pursue thee in vain, while running after the beauteous creatures thou hast made, and thinking there to find thee. Thou wast with me, but I was not with thee; and those things kept me at a distance from thee, which yet could not subsist except in and by thee. I asked the earth, if it was not my God, and it answered No; and all that it contains, unanimously agreed in the same confession. I asked the sea, the great depths, and all the vast and strange variety of creatures, living and engendered in those watery regions; they replied, We

are not thy God, look for him above us. I inquired of the firmament, and the air with all its inhabitants, the sun, and moon, and stars, declared they were not God. Then I desired the object of my senses, to inform me somewhat of that good, which they disclaimed all pretence of being taken for. They all cried out aloud, It is he that made us. At last I resorted to this globe of the world, but there again the answer was, I am not God, but I am by him; the Being whom you seek in me is he that made me. And you look much too low; for he who made and governs me is much more excellent, and seated far above me.

Now by inquiring of the several creatures, I mean by an attentive consideration of their respective natures and conditions, and by their answers, I obtain that evidence of their being created by God, which is the plain result of such a consideration. For most agreeable to the experience of every wise and sober person, is that declaration of the Apostle, that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that were made.

After consulting thus the creatures abroad, I came home at last, descended into myself, and asked, What art thou? The reply made me was, A rational and mortal man. Then I begun to examine what, and from whence this sort of animal should be, and presently reflected, Whence could it possibly be but from thee? It is thou, my God, that hast made me, and not I myself. But still, who art thou? Thou art he, by whom I live; he by whom all things live: thou art the true God, the only omnipotent, and eternal, and incomprehensible and infinite. Everlasting, and nothing dies

in thee; for thou art immortal and inhabitest eternity, wonderful in the eyes of the angels, inexpressible, unsearchable, and of perfection so great as wants a name. Strong and powerful, and greatly to be feared, without beginning and without end, thyself the beginning and the end of all things. Existing before time was, governor and Lord of all that thou hast made; whose causes all are fixed in thee, and the effects subsist in such manner and to such a term, as thy immutable wisdom sees fit.

Tell then thy servant, who desires to know, whence could man take his original, but from thee? Could any of us give life and being to himself? Nay, was it possible for any other to give him either, but for thee alone? Art not thou the first and Supreme Being, from whom all else receive their being? Whatever is, is certainly from thee; for nothing is without thee. Thou art the fountain of life: whatever lives, by thee it lives; for nothing can live without thee. Thou hast made all things, and can I then doubt who made me? Thou certainly art my Maker, and I thy workmanship. Thanks be to my God, by whom I and all things subsist and live, for my creation: thanks to this skilful artificer, whose hands made and fashioned me, for creating me a man. Thanks to that light, which discovered itself to me, and me to myself. For in finding and knowing myself, I find and know thee: and by the communication of thy light it is that I know thee. Thanks, therefore, O my God, all thanks and praise be to thee, for thus enlightening me.

But how can I pretend to say, I know thee thou God infinite, incomprehensible, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hast immortality, and

dwellest in light which cannot be approached unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see? A God that hidest thyself from mortal eyes! And who can know what he hath never seen? The herald, sent to prepare the way for thy truth, proclaimed, No man hath seen God at any time; and that truth itself declared, No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son. Thus the Lord is said to be high above all heavens, and such as even the angels (strictly speaking) do rather admire than behold: This is the heaven to which none hath ascended up, but he that came down from heaven: Thus the Father is known to none, but the Son and the Spirit proceeding from both; and the Son to none but the Father and the same Spirit common to them both: The holy and wonderful Trinity does then exceed all comprehensions but its own; and the very angels, who are continually looking into this glorious essence, and contemplate it with a most intense desire, yet are not able to express, conceive, or acquaint themselves thoroughly with all its most mysterious perfections.

How is it then that I know the most high God, whom neither heaven nor earth contain, whom even cherubim and seraphim adore with astonishment, and veil their faces with their wings before him that sits on the throne; crying out, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory? I know thee not my God, as thou art in thyself, but as thou art with respect to me: not in thy essence, but thy operations; and even this knowledge is not from any powers of my own, but wholly owing to the guidance of that light, which thou art pleased to reflect upon me. Thy glories

are understood by thyself alone, thy grace and goodness manifested to me. And what art thou with respect to me? Tell me, O Lord, and say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Hide not thy face from me, lest I die. Suffer me to speak to thy mercy, who am but dust and ashes. Thou hast made thy voice to be heard from above, and broken through the deafness of my heart; thy light hath shined forth; and thou hast showed me that thou art my Saviour and my merciful God; and thus it is that I have said I know thee.

Thus have I known thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. How wretched was that blindness, in which I saw thee not! how stupid that deafness, when I heard thee not! how miserable my condition, when I loved thee not! For no man loves thee, who does not see thee, and none can see thee, who does not love thee.

Honour and praise, and thanksgiving be to the light of my life, for those manifestations of himself, which he hath vouchsafed to make to my soul. But how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me? Even by instructing me, that thou art my only God and Creator, the true living God, almighty, immortal, invisible, eternal, incomprehensible, unsearchable, unchangeable, infinite, by whom all things were made, and the principles of all subsist. Whose majesty, as it had no beginning or increase, so shall it never have diminution or end. The one only God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one substance, author and common cause of all things visible and invisible, who by thy mighty power didst at the beginning of time form spiritual and corporeal substances; the angels of the former, the things of this world of the

latter sort, and man partaking of both natures, consisting of body and spirit, by a stupendous conjunction of material and immaterial, and all these created out of nothing.

I know and acknowledge thee, O Father, begotten of none; thee, O Son, begotten of the Father; thee, O Holy Ghost, the Comforter, proceeding from both, three persons co-equal, consubstantial, co-eternal. This holy undivided trinity in unity, and unity in trinity, I believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation.

I confess and acknowledge thee the true God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Creator, Saviour, and Redeemer of me, and of all mankind. Begotten of the Father, before all worlds, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father, and Holy Spirit, by whom all things were made. Firmly believing, that thou, God, by a marvellous concurrence of the whole Trinity, wast for us men and for our salvation, incarnate of the ever blessed virgin Mary, conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and so perfect God was made perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Who, though in regard of thy Divine nature, thou art impassible and immortal, yet, for the unspeakable love, wherewith thou hast loved us, didst, by taking our human into that Divine nature, become subject to sufferings and death. And thus the same Son of God condescended to die upon the cross for a time, that he might deliver us from everlasting death. Thou giver of light, descendest into the grave, and the third day didst rise again

from thence a glorious and triumphant conqueror; taking up that blessed body of thine, which for our sins had lain dead in the grave, and restoring it to life the third day, according to the Scriptures, that thou mightest enthrone it at the right hand of the Father. Then didst thou lead that captivity captive, which the enemy of mankind had taken prisoner; and thus, thou the very Son of God, with our substance, that is, the human soul and body, hast ascended up on high, far above all heavens; angels, principalities and powers being made subject to thee; where now thou sittest at the right hand of God, in endless overflowing life, in light inaccessible, in that peace which passeth all understanding.

There we believe and worship Jesus Christ, very God and very man; confessing that God, who hath so exalted thee, is thy Father of a truth; and waiting for thy coming in the end of the world to judge the quick and dead, and render to every man according, to his works; to the good, reward and rest; to the evil, grief and punishment eternal. For at that day shall all men hear thy voice, and shall come forth with their own bodies, that each may receive at thy hand according to that he hath done in his body, whether it be good or bad. Thou art our life, thou art our resurrection, and in thee we look for a Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to his mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

I know and acknowledge thee, the one true God, Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son; of the same substance and eternity with the Father and the Son, our advocate and comforter;

who didst descend like a dove upon the same our Lord Jesus Christ, and appear in fiery tongues upon the blessed Apostles. Who hast from the beginning of the world shed abroad the gifts of thy grace upon all the saints and chosen of God, and opened the mouths of the Prophets, that they might reveal the wonders of his kingdom; who with the Father and the Son together art worshipped and glorified in all churches of the saints. Among whom I also, thy meanest servant, beg leave to publish thy praises, for the saving light communicated to my poor soul. For thou art the true light, the holy fire of God, to whom all saints are subject: the Spirit of truth, who by thy unction teachest us all truth; without whose grace it is impossible to please God; for thou art God of God, and light proceeding after a mysterious and ineffable manner from the Father of lights, and from his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. With these thou art co-equal, and co-eternally united in the same essence, and with them reignest, and art glorified by a singular and a most stupendous union.

Thus do I know the one true God, three in persons, and one in essence; thus do I confess and adore with my whole heart the maker and governor of all things that are in heaven and earth, and under the earth. I know thee by that faith which thou hast inspired into me: for thou art the light of my eyes, the hope of all the ends of the earth, the joy of my youth, and the support of my old age. All my bones shall be joyful in thee, and say, Lord who is like unto thee? Yea, who among the gods is like unto thee, O Lord, who art not made as they were, by men's hands, but who thyself didst make the hands of men? The images of the heathen are sil-

ver and gold, and all their gods are devils. But it is the Lord that made the heavens. The Lord he is the God. The Lord he is the God. Confounded be all the vain gods, and let them find no place in heaven and earth, who made neither heaven nor earth; but let heaven and earth, and all that therein is, for ever glorify and praise thy name; for thou hast made heaven and earth, and all that therein is.

## MEDITATION LIII.

*Man's Vileness and God's Excellence.*

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods, who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Too late, alas! it is, that I am brought to a due sense and knowledge of thee. A thick and gloomy cloud hung too long before my blinded eyes, through which I was not able to discern the Sun of Righteousness and Light of truth. I was muffled up in darkness, a child of darkness, and did not only endure, but love my darkness; because as yet in ignorance of the truth. I was blind, and fond of defect and misery, and every day bewildered more and more, in darkness that might even be felt. And what kind friend was he that took me by the hand to draw me out of this shadow of death? Who so compassionate a guide to this blind wretch, to seek me when I sought not him, to call me when I never cried for help, never complained, nay, never felt my calamitous and lost condition? This can be none but thee, my God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. No bowels less enlarged than thine could show such tender pity and affection. Blessed, therefore, be thy name; for ever blessed be thy name; for ever blessed be thy love, which was found of a miserable creature, who sought thee not, and asked thee not, for him that inquired not after thee.

In this spiritual, as heretofore in the natural creation, thy powerful voice said, let there be light,

and there was light. The gross night which swam before my eyes dissolved in an instant. I felt it scatter, and descried the dawning day, and heard the powerful command, and full of thankful wonder cried out, Thou verily art my God, which hast brought me out of darkness and the shadow of death into thy marvellous light. Thou spakest the word, and behold I see. Then did I first discover the horror of my former darkness, the dismal abyss in which I lay; and trembled at the reflection. O wretched state! O most uncomfortable blindness, which all the light of heaven did not penetrate! O deplorable ignorance! which knew not him who made me, preserves me, is always present with me, always inseparably in me. Thanks to my God, for bringing me to a sight of that, which I must needs have seen before, had not my corruption been so opposite to thy purity; but then, alas! we are in direct contrariety; thou light, I darkness; and discern thee I could not, till thou dartest thyself into my soul; for there is no light besides, none without thee.

Such is my meanness and misery, considered in itself, but I am yet much more vile and despicable in my own sight, when from such reflections I raise my soul to contemplate thy unchangeable majesty, O Lord God most holy, God of gods, and Lord of lords, at whose presence the hosts of angels tremble, dominions and thrones fall down and adore, of whose power and wisdom there is no end, no measure; who hast laid the foundations of the world upon nothing, and gathered the waters of the sea together as an heap; the most mighty God of the spirits of all flesh, at whose word and presence the heavens and the earth quake, and to whose beck

every element pays a ready obedience. Even so, blessed God, be thou for ever worshipped, obeyed, and glorified by thy whole creation. Amen.

In company with these, I, thy unworthy servant, do bow the neck of my heart by faith, and prostrate myself before the footstool of thy majesty, with humble gratitude for all thy mercies, but more especially for that spiritual light and guidance which thou hast been pleased to vouchsafe unto me. By thee, O true light, who lightest every man that cometh into the world, I see and am thankful. I feel thy bright beams descending from above into my soul, cherishing and warming my inward parts, and making glad all my bones: finish, I beseech thee, the good work already begun in me. Increase thy blessed gift, and let the brightness of thy illuminating grace diffuse itself plentifully through every power and faculty of my mind.

What glowing in my breast is this I feel? What light, that darts its rays into my soul? O fire that never art quenched, kindle my affections! O Sun of Righteousness, that never settest, never art clouded, shine in my heart! How sweet is thy warmth! how secret and pleasant thy cheerful light! O let me ever be inflamed with thy Divine, thy delightful beams. Wretched are they that burn with impure fires; wretched, that walk by any other light, and remain destitute of thine: wretched those blind eyes, which do not, wretched those dim eyes which cannot, wretched those wilful eyes which wink hard and will not see the truth. Wretched they, who do not turn away their eyes from beholding vanity; for being long habituated to darkness disables such from bearing the brightness of thy light, or valuing as they ought, the blessing of thy cheering influences. They feel, and approve, and dote upon

darkness; and, sinking every day into grosser degrees of ignorance, know not upon what slippery ground they stand, nor the dangerous precipices into which they are falling. O miserable wretches, who are not sensible of the worth of what they lose! And yet more miserable those hardened souls, who are sensible of their loss and ruin, but nevertheless stumble and fall with eyes broad open, and go down quick into hell.

O heavenly lustre! which discoverest thyself only to unblemished eyes and clean hearts! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Cleanse me thoroughly, thou sanctifying Spirit; take out the beams and motes from my eyes, that I may be qualified steadily to behold thy Divine beauties. Command the scales of my old errors to fall off, which like thick mists dance before my deluded sight, and pierce them through with thy resplendent beams, that in thy light I may see light. Praised be my God, the fountain of light; for, whereas I was formerly blind, now I see: strengthen then, I beseech thee, and diffuse this grace yet more plentifully in my soul. Open thou my eyes, that I may discern the wondrous things of thy law. Thanks for the prospect I already have of thy stupendous perfections, which though as yet but distant and indistinct, dark and through a glass, is such as makes me vehemently desire a nearer view, and one that may be face to face. O! when shall that day of joy and triumph come, which shall introduce me into the secret place of thy dwelling, the constant bright abode of thy majestic presence, that I may satisfy my largest wishes, and find a fresh and never-ceasing pleasure in still desiring what I enjoy, and enjoying what I desire.

## MEDITATION LIV.

*Desires for future Happiness.*

Like as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. O fountain of living water, when shall I, who have travelled through this dry and desolate wilderness, in which there is no way, approach thee, that my soul may be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy mercy? Behold, O Lord, thou art the well of life, I thirst, O quench my thirst. Yea, after the living God do I thirst, O suffer me to drink of thy pleasures; and hasten that day of praise and thanksgiving; that day which thou, O Lord, hast made, that thy servants may rejoice and be glad in it. O glorious day! O everlasting morning! whose sun never declines, in which I shall hear that most transporting sentence, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Into that joy, where are things great and unsearchable, yea, marvellous things without number. A joy without conclusion, without interruption, without allay; where we shall meet with all we can wish, and rest secure from all we can fear; free from the enemy's assaults, from the tempter's seducing insinuations; full of security, and rest, and peace, blessed with the ravishing vision of the Deity for ever: such is the joy of the Lord thy God.

O joy most exquisite, most excellent, most comprehensive; above which, in comparison of which, beside which, there is no joy. When shall I enter

into thee, and behold my God that dwelleth in thee? What is it that detains me from him whom my soul loveth? How long shall it be said unto my eager heart, wait, wait patiently: And now, O Lord, what do I wish and wait for? Surely it is for thee, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto thy glorious body. Surely it is for my Lord's coming to the marriage, that he may admit me into the bride chamber. Come quickly, Lord, and do not tarry. Come Lord Jesus in, and visit us in peace and favour; come and unlock our prison doors, that thy released may rejoice before thee with a perfect heart. Come, thou desire of all nations, show the light of thy countenance, and we shall be whole. Come, my Light, my Redeemer, and set my soul at liberty, that I may give thanks unto thy holy name. How long must I continue to be tossed upon the waves of this mortal life, crying unto thee, O Lord, and thou hearest not? Bow down thine ear, I beseech thee, and listen when I call out of the deep, and bring me to the haven of everlasting bliss.

O happy souls, who are delivered from the perils of this sea, and got safe to shore; who have reached their native country, and exchanged their prison for a palace! Happy those combatants, who have received that crown of glory, which they endured the fight of various afflictions to obtain, and are now translated from short tribulations to endless triumphs! Happy beyond all expression, who have put off their load of frailty and suffering, who are in quiet possession of the glory which fadeth not away, and clothed with majesty and honour! O blessed state, O kingdom everlasting, where the souls of the saints are in peace and felicity, where

eternal rejoicing is upon every head, and sorrow and sighing flee away. Where the saints reign with thee their beloved Lord, and deck themselves with light as with a garment. O kingdom ever blessed, in which thou, Lord, the hope and crown of all thy faithful servants, makest them glad with the joy of thy countenance, and that peace which passeth all understanding. Their joy knows no bounds, their mirth no sorrow, their health no pain, their light no intervals of darkness, their life hath no death, their happiness is universal, without the least mixture of evil: their youth is ever fresh and gay, their beauty always blooming, their love ever fervent, their pleasures have no abatement. For thou, O God, art their all in all, their sole, their chief, their perfect good.

But the more we admire the happiness of them who are exalted to this secure and blissful state already, the greater cause have we to bewail our own misery, who are still exposed to all the storms and shipwreck of a tempestuous and troubled sea: for we, alas! can only hope the best, but are not sure that we shall ever make the port of everlasting life and salvation. For our life is a state of exile and captivity, our end unknown, our prospect wrapped up in clouds of a dark futurity. We lie at the mercy of winds and waves, and cast many a weary and longing look to the land of our hope and rest. But, O thou stay of our souls, our refuge and strength, whose light, like the sailor's star, shines through the thick clouds that hang over our heads, guide, we beseech thee, this floating vessel with the helm of thy cross, lest the deep swallow us up. Draw us out of these surges to thyself, our only comfort, whom now our weeping eyes can but

just discern, standing afar off, like the dawn of the morning star, to conduct and receive us to the wished-for regions of light: we are thy redeemed, and as such cry unto thee; captives indeed at present, but such as thou hast ransomed with thy most precious blood. Hear us, O God of our salvation, thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea. Thou standest upon the shore, and seest our dangers, and how our vessel works in the storm; O save us for thy name's sake, and so direct our course, that we may happily decline those rocks on every side, which if we strike upon we are dashed to pieces. Thou knowest the value of our cargo, and the difficulties of the voyage. Save, Master, or we perish.

This is our distressed condition at present, but when thou hast brought us home to thyself, the fountain of wisdom and Father of lights, such complaints and all occasion for them shall cease. Then in thy light shall we see light; not such as our corporeal eyes are now blessed with, but light unbodied, incorruptible, unquenchable, uncreated, the inaccessible, the true, the Divine light; that which enlightens angels, and is the privilege and joy of saints, even the Source of light and life, even thee, my Lord and my God. For thou art the light, in whose light we shall see light, that is, behold thee, and in thyself, and face to face. Which what else can it import, but, as thy blessed Apostle hath very justly explained it, knowing as we are known; being let into a distinct view and knowledge of thy truth and glory? So that to see thy face is in effect to know the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the clemency and goodness of the Holy

Ghost, and the mysterious adorable union of all three in one undivided essence. And thus to see the living God, is the most exalted happiness, the honour and reward of blessed spirits, the crown of glory and eternal bliss, the beauty of peace, the paradise of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and that fulness of joy which no finite mind can comprehend. For this is the utmost blessedness of glorified man, to see him who made heaven and earth, the infinitely good Being, which created, and saved, and brought him to bliss and glory with himself. This sight consists in a clear knowledge of him, in loving and admiring, in praising and possessing him. For he is the inheritance of his people, even of the spirits whom he hath purchased of old. He is their portion, and the recompense of their hopes and holy labours. I am thy exceeding great reward, was his declaration and promise to Abraham, and a promise it was every way worthy the Divine Maker: for great and noble things suit the character of great and noble persons. Thou indeed, my God, art exalted far above all gods, and thy reward is proportionably high, as thou art, so is that exceeding great; for thou art not one thing and thy reward another, but both the same, and both exceeding great. Thou art the bestower of the crown, and the crown itself; the maker of the promise, and the matter of the promise; the giver and the gift; the diadem of hope bedecked with glory; the desire and the joy of thy holy ones. The sight of thee is therefore all that bliss and recompense we can possibly hope for. This is eternal life, this thy own wisdom, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. When therefore we shall see thee,

the only, the true, the living, the almighty, infinite and incomprehensible Father; and thy only begotten Son, whom thou sent into the world for our salvation, by the power of the Holy Ghost; when we shall see those three persons in the unity of that Spirit, one only Divine essence, besides whom there is no God; then shall we actually possess what we now solicitously labour after; even that everlasting life and glory, which thou hast prepared for them that love thee, laid up for them that fear thee, and the portion of them that seek thy face continually.

And thou, O Lord my God, who hast formed me and preserved me from my mother's womb, suffer me not, I beseech thee, to be diverted from this one, and distracted in the pursuit of many objects; but call in my wandering thoughts scattered upon things without, and let me stand collected in myself, and from myself, rise up and fix on thee alone; that my heart may always be in a condition of saying with thy devout Psalmist, Thou hast said seek ye my face—thy face, Lord, will I seek: even the face of the Lord of hosts, in the vision whereof the everlasting life and glory of blessed spirits in heaven consists. Let my heart therefore rejoice, that it may fear thy name. Yea, let the heart of them rejoice, that seek the Lord. But if the heart of them who seek him only, be affected with so sensible a joy, how ravishing and intense must theirs needs be, who do not only seek but find him? I will therefore seek thy face constantly, zealously, incessantly, that so at length the gate of righteousness may be opened, and I may go into the joy of my Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it.

O glorious kingdom, to the inheritance whereof we are advanced, without the melancholy forms of death and succession, and whose possession knows no change or end; but one perpetual day, subject to no revolution of time; and never-fading laurels upon the head of each triumphant soldier, who hath fought manfully, and weathered all the toil and hardships of this spiritual warfare! How do I long for that most blessed time, when this poor unworthy creature, the last and least of all my Master's servants, shall be called upon to put off this load of sin and corruption, and thus disburdened, remove, and fix my habitation in the heavenly city, mingling with that harmonious host above, and doing homage with them in the blessed presence of my glorious Lord: released not only from the sense, but even the sorrowful remembrances of death and suffering, ignorance and infirmity, diseases and temptations, decays and pains, false pleasures and violent passions, which are our constant exercise and misery, while we continue our journey through this valley of tears.

## MEDITATION LV.

*The Pleasure of Meditating upon God.*

How sweet, O gracious Lord, who in wonderful kindness hast so loved and saved, enlivened and sanctified, and exalted us, how inexpressibly sweet are the thoughts and the remembrance of thee! The more I dwell on these reflections, the more I feel my soul exhilarated and transported with them. The excellences of thy nature, and merciful dispensations of thy providence, I contemplate with reverence and delight; and feel the joys resulting from them swell to a pitch, as high as this distance of a sojourner in a strange land admits. More I covet earnestly, and daily aspire after, and can but covert and aspire after, during my confinement to a body of flesh and frailty. I am wounded with the darts of thy love, and burn with eager desire of seeing and being inseparably united to him whom my soul longeth to enjoy. I will therefore stand upon my guard, and take good heed to my ways; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding, and exert my utmost activity in setting forth the praises of him, who hath made me his own by a double title; first by creating, and then by renewing and restoring my nature. My soul shall mount above the highest heavens, and in desire dwell with thee continually: that however my bodily presence detain me here below, yet in my inclinations and affections I may

reside above, and so my heart be where thou, its best and most desirable treasure art.

But pity, I beseech thee, gracious Lord, the impotence and infirmities of thy servant, who, the more he contemplates thine infinite majesty and goodness, the more conscious he is of his disability to rise up to the dignity of that subject. My heart is too narrow, and thy unbounded excellences, thy beauty, and power, and glory, and love, exceed the largest comprehensions of any human mind. As the brightness of thy majesty is inconceivable, so are the bowels of that everlasting mercy, by which thou adoptest them for thy own children, and receivedst them to be one with thyself, whom thou at first createdst out of nothing.

Consider, O my soul, the greatness of this love, and the noble privileges accruing to thee from it: for if thou hast just notions of these things, thou wilt be perfectly convinced, that if the enduring daily pains and sickness, nay, if the torments of hell itself for a season, were made the condition of beholding Christ in his glory, and being received into the number and society of the blessed above; no sufferings could be so exquisite, that they ought not to be gladly entertained, none which would not find themselves abundantly recompensed, by obtaining a portion in that transcendant felicity. What though the devils then lay wait for us, and draw us into sharp trials of our virtue; what though this body be macerated with fasting, fretted with sackcloth, fatigued with toil, and dried up for want of sleep; what though my enemy deride, or rail against, or create me mischief and disquiet; though cold, or want, or pain, or sickness, wear out a tedious life in sighs and incessant complaints; let my strength

be spent in heaviness, and my years in mourning; let me roar for the very anguish of my heart, and my body have no soundness or whole part in it, provided I may find rest in the day of tribulation, and rejoice at last in the felicity of thy chosen, and give thanks with thine inheritance.

For how can we esteem that glory according to its worth, or what can be a purchase equivalent to that happiness, in which the face of every righteous man shall shine as the sun in its strength? When the Lord shall reckon up his people, and distribute them into their respective ranks, and the degrees of bliss differing from each other, in proportion to the good they have done in their respective bodies; when he shall put the faithful in possession of those promises they so long depended upon; and in exchange for earthly, give them heavenly, for temporal and transitory, eternal and never-fading goods; and make them who have acquitted themselves well in a very little, rulers over much; nothing sure can be added to the happiness of that day, when the Lord shall introduce his holy ones into his Father's presence, and make them sit down with himself in heavenly places, that God may be all in all.

O bliss inexpressible, to see the saints, to be with them, to be one of them; to see God as he is, and to possess him for ever and ever! O let this bliss be often in our thoughts, always uppermost, nay, only in our desires: for it deserves the whole of us, and this is the method of insuring it to ourselves. For if the greatness of the prize put you, as well it may, upon inquiring how you can ever hope to compass it, which way you can deserve it, or what assistances are necessary for this purpose, the answer is

short and ready. For God hath so ordained that it is in every man's power to be happy, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; to desire and resolve, and endeavour and strive, is to be qualified, and no man ever failed in his attempt, who was willing to take by force.

This kingdom is indeed an invaluable treasure; but yet every man is capable of being a purchaser, because the only price God expects for it is a man's self. Give but yourself, and this will be looked upon as a consideration sufficient. And therefore never be discouraged at the disproportion betwixt what you can pay, and what you can hope to receive: for the purchase is paid by another hand to the utmost farthing. This was done when Christ gave himself; and he gave himself, that he might ransom you, and make your heart a kingdom for his Father to reign in. Deliver therefore yourself into his possession, that sin may no longer reign in your body unto death, but that God may dwell and reign in you by his Spirit, for the attainment of everlasting life.

How eager then, my soul, should we be to return to that heavenly city, where our home and our privileges are, where we are free denizens, and have our names enrolled in the book of God? Since therefore we are fellow-citizens with the saints, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, let us very diligently represent to ourselves the glorious advantages of these characters, and the bliss of our native place, in the best light our present thoughts can set them. Let us cry out with the prophet of old, How excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God; all thy inhabitants are like them that sing, Beautiful art thou for situation, and the joy

of the whole earth: into thy gates enter neither old age, nor decay, nor misery; no lame or maimed, no deformity or defect, but all grow up into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

What can be wanting, what be added, to the happiness of that life, which is never threatened with poverty or sickness, never molested with wrongs or violence, with anger or envy, or exorbitant desire: where all the present necessities of nature cease, and the restless ambition of honour and power, and riches find no place: where we are no longer in fear of any devil, or in danger of his temptations, or in so much as a possibility of his torments: where neither body nor soul can die, but both are endued with a life everlasting, ever delightful: no casualties, no malice, no quarrels or factions, but universal agreement, profound peace, and perfect love; where the day never declines, but light is as perpetual as it is glorious? For that city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, but the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Nay, the saints, too, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever.

Hence there is no night, nor darkness, nor clouds, no extremities of heat and cold, but such a happy temper in all respects, as no eye hath seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any man to conceive; except those happy souls, whom their own experience shall instruct, and whose names are written in the book of life. To all this we may add the honour and happiness of associating with Patriarchs and Prophets, of con-

versing with Apostles, and Martyrs, and Saints, and all those dear relations and friends, who went thither before us. These are very glorious advantages; but that which far excels them all is, that we shall see the face of God, and ever admire and gaze upon, and rejoice in his excellent glory. O happiness inestimable, when we shall see God as he is in himself; when we shall see him, and enjoy him ourselves, and when this sight and fruition shall never have any interruption, any end.

## MEDITATION LVI.

*The Advantages of loving God.*

The soul which is stamped with the image of God and is glorious in proportion to her conformity with his holiness, hath from her Maker an innate principle which reminds her of her duty, and enables her either to persevere steadfast with God, or quickly to return to him, if at any time, through the violence of her passions, or any other imperfections, she be drawn aside. Nor hath she only hopes of preserving a spiritual life, by the reviving prospect of mercy and pardon, but is allowed to aim at higher matters, and aspire to enter into strict bonds of inviolable amity with God, and to be yoked in love with the King of angels.

Of such mighty efficacy is love, it brings our will to a resemblance of God, and assimilates us to that object by inclination, which we already resemble by nature; all which is done, when we love as we are beloved. For love is the only motion and affection of the soul, which can qualify a creature to answer the ends of its Creator, and to make, though not a full, yet an acceptable and thankful compensation for all his goodness to it. Where love takes place, it presently gets dominion, and brings over all the rest of the affections in subjection to itself. Love is of itself sufficient, and pleases for its own sake. It is both the duty and the reward; the cause and the effect of doing well: by this we are reconciled and intimately united to God.

Love makes two minds become one: it inspires the same inclinations and the same aversions: it is the standard and rule, by which we frame our actions and dispositions: it considers things present as though they were not; and looks upon heavenly and spiritual things with a pure unprejudiced view. It first prevails with men to behave themselves decently in matters of this world, and then raises their thoughts above this world, so to despise all below, and at last to fix their view upon those of another, and dwell with delight upon the mysterious excellences of God himself. It lets us into those beauties of the Divine nature, which are otherwise too high and bright for us to behold, and helps us to imitate what it helps to see and to admire!

Love is an enemy to distance and formal respect; it gives us confidence in approaching to God, aspires after a friendly and familiar conversation with him, and emboldens us to speak to him without fear or doubting. He lives to no purpose who lives without this grace. But he that keeps his eye always fixed upon God, as the supreme, the sole object of his thoughts and desires, he meditates upon him, delights in him, is fed and nourished by him.

A man thus devoted to God, sings his praises, pours out prayers to him, reads his word, performs every part of his duty, and demeans himself in every action of his life with such care and circumspection, as if his bodily eyes saw God present (as in truth he is present) with him, in every thing he says or does. His prayers are so fervent, and his mind in them so exalted, as if it were no longer in the body, but translated and wrapt up into that glorious place, where thousand thousands of angels prostrate themselves before the throne of the ma-

jesty on high, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him. The soul which is visited by love, is effectually awakened out of its sleep; it is softened and instructed, and smitten with its force. This turns darkness into light; opens that which was shut; warms and fires that which was frozen; smooths the rough and angry, and impatient; chases away vicious, and subdues carnal affections; corrects the temper, and renews the spirit of the inner man. It is an effectual check to the follies and the levities of youth, and a strong guard against spiritual danger and temptations. So sensible, so strong is the power of love, when cherished and present with us; but when this cools or quite goes out, our good dispositions languish and die, and can no more be preserved than fire without fuel, or the boiling of a pot, when the heat is taken from under it.

Great indeed are the advantages of this virtue, which gives the soul immediate access with confidence to God, and stands in no need of any introducer, which preserves a close union with him, and consults him freely upon any emergency that requires his counsel and help. A soul thus affected hath God continually in its thoughts and discourse, and despises, disdains every thing besides. All its reflections, all its conversation relish of this love, so entirely is the man in the possession of it. The way to know God truly, is to love him. It is to very little purpose that we read, or meditate, that we hear, or preach, or pray, if this be not at the bottom of our religious exercises: for by loving God we come to love our own souls, and to be solicitous for their safety and true happiness. The end of God's loving us, is, that we may love him in

return; and the requiring this at our hands, is a fresh instance of his favour, because he knows that they who love him are sure to be happy upon that very account.

The soul that loves, renounces all its own appetites, and attends to this only, that so it may answer the end of being loved by loving again. And though in our payment of this tribute we be never so profuse, yet what, alas! is this in comparison of that inexhausted source of love, ever running over, ever flowing in upon us? For we greatly mistake, if we have the vanity to imagine, that in what we pay, and what we receive, the soul and God, the creature and the Creator, can ever meet upon equal terms. But if a man love with his whole heart, though this be nothing as to any intrinsic value of its own, yet it is esteemed not to be defective, because he is capable of no more. Let not the soul then that thus loves God be discouraged; the only just cause of fear is, when we do not love him as we may and ought.

The soul that loves after this manner, is eager in her wishes, fixed in her desires, lays no stress upon her best actions, but thinks all she can do too little; is not terrified by the majesty of God, but ravished with delight in the contemplation of his mercy, takes sanctuary in his goodness, and converses with him frequently and freely. This does, as it were, carry the man out of himself, and make him act separately from his bodily senses, that he seems to have no longer any regard to himself, but is entirely swallowed up in God. Nor are these airy and romantic notions, but such as every one's own experience will confirm to him, when transported with the unspeakable sweetness of heavenly

meditations. He does then as it were make an escape from every other object, that he may be diverted and interrupted by no other thoughts, but enjoy perfect happiness, and give himself up entirely to God. Nothing could add to this ravishing satisfaction, were but the continuance equal to the intenseness of it. For the love of God contracts an intimate acquaintance with him, that acquaintance begets an assurance, that assurance creates a sensible delight, and that delight breeds a desire of more and greater intimacies. A soul thus inflamed is full of longings and thirstings, and often cries out with the psalmist, Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Love brought down God to men; this induced him to dwell among men; this moved him to be himself made man: he in his nature is invisible; but this rendered him not only visible, but, in wonderful condescension, like to his own servants; it was love that wounded him for our transgression; incomprehensible, unexampled love, that made his soul heavy to the death, and poured out his heart's blood upon the cross. Love, that provided a sure retreat for miserable sinners, by opening that passage to their Saviour's heart. By this, thither now I can betake myself, and what I want of merit of myself, supply out of the bowels of my pierced Redeemer. There is a perpetual spring of mercy, and through the wounds in his body I can approach the recesses of his soul. These sufferings unlock the mystery of godliness, and show me that tender compassion of my Lord, whereby the day-spring from on high visited lost wretches, when they sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

I love thee, O my God, and desire to love thee every day more fervently. For thou art beautiful and amiable above the sons of men, and deservest an affection equal to thy own adorable and incomprehensible excellences. Equal to the marvellous instances of goodness, of which thy unspeakable condescension in working out the eternal salvation of mankind, hath given such plentiful, such astonishing proofs. O let that fire descend into my heart, which burns with a bright and holy flame, never languishing, never to be quenched. May every part of me feel the kindly heat, may it expand itself, and burn up every other passion: that all the dross of vain and polluted passions and desires being entirely consumed, I may be turned all into love, and know no other object of that love but thee alone, my dearest, and most lovely Saviour.

May this glorious sight make me forget my sufferings, soften, and even recommend my present troubles, leave me no longer grovelling upon the dust, but enable me to leave earth and its vain objects behind. So that I may then look down with disdain upon the tumults and dangers, the follies and miseries of this world: and with a mind perfectly composed, may rest myself upon thee, the true, the holy, the undisturbed peace of every truly pious and devout Christian.

## MEDITATION LVII.

*Safety in hte Death of Christ.*

When any sinful imagination solicits me, I will straight take sanctuary in my Saviour's wounds. When the flesh weighs down my soul, the remembrance of his sufferings shall break all my fetters, and set me free by heavenly thoughts again. When the devil lays his snares to entrap and destroy me, I will flee for help to the mercies of my dying Lord, and the enemy shall soon feel himself disappointed and retire from me. If lust be kindled in my breast, and stir my body to rebellion, I will reflect on the agonies of the Son of God for my sake, and those impure fires shall be quenched. In any sort of suffering or distress I can find no comfort, no relief comparable to the consideration of my afflicted Saviour: in his wounds I can lay me down and sleep securely; these are my defence and the support of my soul in any temptation that assaults me, in any affliction that befalls me.

Christ died for us; surely then the bitterness of death is past, and nothing can be so grievous to human nature, that it may not be mollified by this consideration. In that death of his, is all my hope and trust; I plead no other merit, I ask no other refuge; this is my health, my life, nay, my second and better life, my resurrection from the dead. His mercies are great, immeasurably great, and how worthless soever I may be in myself, yet while I am looked upon as having a share in these, I cannot be

rejected or despised. For his mercies prove him willing to save, and therefore his power is no longer a terror, but my best security,

I am indeed a very grievous sinner, and my conscience upbraids me with numberless and heinous transgressions against God and his most righteous laws; but notwithstanding these reproaches of my own breast make me sometimes uneasy and afraid, yet do I not despair; because where sin hath abounded, there grace hath much more abounded. Nay, I must not, I dare not despair; for this were to bind one fault upon another, and to aggravate all the wickedness I had ever been guilty of before. For he that despairs of forgiveness for his offences, does in effect declare, that God is not merciful; and by distrusting, robs him of his beloved attribute, which is the highest outrage and injustice that any man can possibly commit against God. He does, as much as in him lies, bear testimony in contradiction to that love, and truth, and power, which are the only foundation, on which all hopes are built. For how could I hope had not his love adopted me, had not his truth promised, had not his power redeemed me? Let then my foolish misgivings murmur within me never so importunately, let them ask me never so insultingly, what can I pretend to, or how dare I presume to suppose, that any deserts of mine should procure me so excellent, so very disproportionate a reward; still my hope stands firm, and I shall reply with assurance, as St. Paul had left me a pattern, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he who made me his own son by adoption, loves me exceedingly; that he who is true, will be as good as his word, and that he who is Almighty can lie under no temptation, not to

make it good; he can perform his promise to the uttermost, and the very promising shows him as willing as he is able to do it.

My sins are not only great, but many; but neither their quality nor their number terrifies me, when the death of my Saviour comes into my mind; because I know they cannot in either respect outweigh his sufferings upon my account. The nails and spear proclaim my deliverance, and attest my reconciliation with Christ, provided I sincerely love him. The soldier opened me an entrance into his side, and into the clefts of those wounds I can retreat with safety. If any man be afraid of his condition, let him learn to love; for this love will be sure to cast out all anxious and desponding fear. Our Redeemer stretched out his arms upon the cross, by that posture to signify his readiness to receive sinners into his embraces, when they flee to him for succour. In those dear arms I delight to live, and in them I desire to die. There can I with a light and joyful heart sing with the Prophet, I will magnify thee, O Lord, for thou hast set me up, and not made my foes to triumph over me. Our kind Saviour bowed his head when he gave up the Ghost, and in so doing stooped down to meet and to kiss his beloved ones. And every one of us may be properly said to kiss our Lord, every time we feel our hearts sensibly wounded, and devoutly affected with his love.

And shall not this be the constant effect of our meditations upon it? Yes sure, my soul, since thou art honoured by the impress and character of thy great Maker, since thou art ransomed with the most precious blood of thy Redeemer, since thou art betrothed to this Divine spouse by faith, endowed

with his Spirit, adorned with his graces, and advanced to the dignity of angels in his gracious designs for thy everlasting felicity; do thy diligence to love him, who hath so wonderfully loved thee: set thy heart upon him, who sets his upon thee; seek him who hath so solicitously sought thee; whose goodness hath prevented thee, and is the cause of thine. He is the merit, he the reward, he the fruit and the end of thy love. Conform thyself therefore in all things to him; let his care excite thine, his leisure entertain thine, be clean with the clean, and holy with the holy. Such as thou pretentest thyself before God, such apprehensions it is plain thou entertainest concerning him. If thou believest him full of meekness, and goodness, and mercy, thou canst not but conclude, that he expects all his children should be gentle and kind, compassionate and humble. Strive to be like him then, and let this likeness prove, (for nothing else can prove it,) that thou dost truly love him, whose compassion brought thee out of the mire and clay, and drew thee back from the bottomless pit of destruction.

Choose him for thy friend, and prefer him before all other friends, who when all other confidences forsook and betrayed thee, was the only one that stuck close to thee in thy extremity. In the day of thy death, when no friend else will or can do thee service, he will not desert thee: then will this kind Saviour be sure to stand by thee, and save thee from the reproof of him that would eat thee up; deliver thy soul from those roaring lions that wait ready to tear it in pieces, and carry it up on high through unknown ways; bring thee to the heavenly Jerusalem, and place thee amongst angels

in his own presence, where thou shall hear that heavenly song, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! There is the voice of joy and health, of thanksgiving and praise, and never-ceasing hallelujahs: there is the perfection of happiness, and glory, and gladness, and every thing desirable and good.

Pant eagerly, my soul, and let all thy desires loose after this blessed place: that thou mayest come into that city above, of which such glorious things are spoken. And love will carry thee thither, how steep soever the ascent may seem. For this surmounts all difficulties, and leaves nothing impossible to the person actuated by it. This takes frequent flights thither even while upon earth, and walks with great freedom through the streets of Jerusalem above; it visits the Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles, beholds with wonder the regular armies of martyrs and confessors, and the beauty of chaste and holy virgins. In short, both heaven and earth, and every thing in each, are ever inculcating this duty; that I ought to love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my mind, will all my soul, and with all my strength.

## MEDITATION LVIII.

*The Marks of True Love.*

The man that truly loves God is always thinking when he shall be so happy as to be with him, when he shall leave the world, and make an escape out of this prison of corruption, that his soul may be free, and find perfect ease and peace: and even while in the flesh, he lives not after the flesh, but sends his thoughts and desires up to heaven before him; sitting or standing, in motion or at rest, in every posture, in every action, he keeps God continually in his mind. He is very zealous in persuading others to love God, and representing to them the duty and advantage of doing so; he endeavours to convince them how pleasant this is, and how unsatisfactory and tormenting the love of the world. And to prove that all this is not mere cant and affectation, his temper, his whole conversation, speak him to be in very good earnest, and confirm the truth of his arguments.

Upon the honours and riches of this present life he looks down with a just disdain; pities or despises the misery of those who take such pains about them; shows how extremely foolish it is, to place one's confidence in things that are continually flying from one; wonders at the blindness and stupidity of the wretches that doat upon them; and that every body does not see so little in them as to quit these for somewhat more substantial. He is satisfied, that would they submit to make the expe-

riment without prejudice or passion, all the world would approve his better choice, find inexpressible pleasure in what he loves, and be fully satisfied in the truth of that which is to him evident beyond a doubt. He frequently entertains himself with the contemplations of God, and feels a wonderful comfort and refreshment from them; the more sensible and sweet in proportion as they are oftener repeated: for that which is always worthy of our praise and love, cannot but be always delightful to our thoughts.

This is indeed the true peace of the soul, when it gets loose from all distraction of thought, and contracts all its desires into God alone, as their proper centre. This leaves no vacant space for other inclinations, but all is full of that which employs it, and entirely contented with the pleasure resulting from thence. And if any time it happen, (as sometimes during this frail state it will) that any trifling thought, or multiplicity of business come in between, all this is looked upon as a digression or impertinence, and the man makes all the haste that possibly he can, back to his main point. To dwell upon any thing else he looks upon as a punishment like that of being banished from one's own country. For as there is no moment of our lives, in which we do not taste some fresh instance of God's goodness, so should there be none in which this great Benefactor, who is continually present by his mercies, should not be present also in our thoughts and thankful remembrances.

This consideration must needs make the fault of those men very great, who when they come to, and converse with God in prayer, presently dismiss all their devout affections, and behave themselves

as though he neither saw nor heard them. And thus does every one who pursues his own sinful or worldly designs, and prefers some worthless creature, by which his mind is easily diverted from better and more important considerations. And he prefers such before God, who employs more of his pains and thoughts upon this, than he does upon God; who ought to be perpetually there, and constantly remembered as our Creator, adored as our Redeemer, waited for as our Saviour, feared as our Judge.

Consider therefore, man, when the world begins to get within thee, what thou art doing, and where this course will end: withdraw thyself by degrees from business and noise; and run away from the confusion and perplexity of a distracted mind. Unload thy cares, and give a little of thy time to God; enter into thy chamber and commune with thy own heart: let none be admitted into these retirements, besides Him, and such assistants as may be useful in the search after him. Then let thy heart sincerely profess with the Prophet, Thou hast said, seek ye my face—thy face, Lord, will I seek. Yea, Lord, I covet earnestly, but all in vain, except thou teach my heart, where and how to find thee. For if thou art not here, whither shall I go to look for thee? But if thou art not only here, but every where, how comes it to pass, that I do not discern thee? I am told thou dwellest in the light, which no man can approach unto; and how vain is the attempt to go in quest of a person inaccessible? Or who shall conduct me thither, that I may see thee there, whither it seems no human power can come? But by what marks should I distinguish thee, having never seen thy face? What

shall this miserable stranger do, that longs impatiently to behold thee, laments his distance, and knows not how to shorten it; would gladly find thee, and cannot tell where thou dwellest; desires to possess thee, and yet does not know thy face?

O Lord, thou art my God, and I thy creature, doubly thy creature, by nature first, and afterward by grace: all I ever had, and all I hope for, is of thy hand alone, and yet I have not seen thee at any time, neither known thee: nay, for this very end was I created, that I might see thee, and have not all this while attained the intent of my creation. Hard fate of them, who answer not the end for which they were at all! Yet such is now the case of miserable man; he is fallen from the happiness to which he was designed, into the misery which was never intended for him. That is departed from him, without which there can be no happiness; and that remains with him, which in its own nature is exquisitely miserable. Man did once eat that angels' food, which he now hungers after; but now he eats the bread of affliction, with which he then was utterly unacquainted. I hunger after thee, O Lord, let me not be sent empty away; but gratify the appetite which thou hast approved, which thou thyself hast infused.

Teach me how to seek thee; for even this I cannot do without thy guidance: nor can I find thee, till thou art pleased in mercy to show thyself to me. Let me so seek as to desire, and so desire as diligently to seek thee; so love as to find; and so find as entirely to love thee.

## MEDITATION LIX.

*The Happiness of the Saints.*

Why dost thou then, deluded creature, let thy desires run wild upon variety of objects, and from these vainly expect, that soul and body should be happy? Love that one good, in which all others centre, and this will answer all thy wishes: whatever can contribute to the perfection of thy outward or inward man, is there to be met with in abundance. If beauty delight thee, the righteous are promised to shine as the sun: if activity or strength, or freedom of operation, which no resistance can obstruct, remember they shall be as the angels of God, and that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body; that is, it shall resemble those spirits in its activity and penetration, and powers, though not in nature and substance. If length of days and a sound constitution be thy desire, there shall be health unimpaired, and immortality; for the just shall live for ever, and their health is of the Lord. If gratification of desires to the full, they shall be satisfied when they wake up after their Lord's likeness. If musical entertainment, there the angels never cease their melodious praises to God: if any chaste pleasures, of such God shall give them to drink, as out of a river. If wisdom, the most wise God shall then unlock his treasures, and let them into the knowledge of his own mysterious nature and providence. If friend-

ship, there they shall love God above themselves, and one another as themselves; and God shall love them more than they love themselves. If perfect agreement, there shall be but one soul and one will, for they shall all have no will but God's. If power, they shall be absolute masters of their own will, as God is of his: for as God can do whatever he pleases by his own power, so they shall be enabled to do whatever they please, by and through him; for as they shall will nothing but what he wills, so he wills whatever they will, and therefore whatever they will must needs be accomplished. If honour and riches, God shall make his faithful and good servants rulers over many things; nay, they shall be dignified with the title of gods, and the sons of God, and shall be actually heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If secure possession, they shall have as much assurance, that no part of their happiness shall ever forsake them, as they can have that they can never consent to part with it; and that God who loved them so as to vest them in it, can never take it away from them he loves so dearly against their consent; or as they know that nothing is stronger than God, or can separate between him and them. And who can conceive the excellency and greatness of that joy, which must needs result from so inconceivably excellent and great a good?

O heart of man, ever wanting somewhat to make up thy satisfaction, every day exercised with pains and sorrows, and almost quite oppressed with the mighty weight and uninterrupted succession of miseries, how wouldest thou exult, should all this bliss flow in upon thee? Ask thy most secret recesses whether they could so expand themselves, as to re-

ceive the joy which must needs spring up from such exquisite happiness, considered purely as thy own. But further yet, consider that if any other person, equally dear to thee as thy own self, should enjoy the same happiness, this would double thy joy, because thou wouldest be as glad for his sake as for thy own. Again, if two, or three, or more, thus dear to thee, were in the same blessed condition, this joy would be multiplied equally for every one of these. Now according to this way of arguing, what can we suppose will be the rejoicing in heaven, where angels and saints innumerable partake of the happiness, which I have been but very imperfectly describing, and every one of these united in a charity so fervent, that none of them loves any of the rest less than himself, and consequently will rejoice for each of them as much as for himself?

If then the heart of man be scarce large enough to contain his joy, for his own single happiness, how shall it find room for so many joys so vastly increased, so often multiplied? Again, in regard we naturally rejoice in the felicity of another in proportion to the love we bear to that person; it will follow from hence, that since in that state God is incomparably more dear to every saint, than that saint is to himself, and all his brethren to him; every saint will consequently feel more satisfaction, and exult incomparably more in the glory and blessedness of God, than he will in his own and all his brethren's put together. And if they so love God with all their heart, and all their mind and soul, that even all their heart, and mind and soul, wants room for the largeness of their affection; they will certainly rejoice too with all their heart, and mind, and soul, so exquisitely, that even all

their heart, and mind, and soul, shall overflow and be too narrow to contain the fulness of their joy.

Tell me then, O my God and my Lord, my hope and the delight of my heart, whether this be the joy meant by thy blessed Son, when he says to his disciples, Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. For I have here discovered a joy, that seems not only full, but even more than full: since, after all our faculties are filled, there still remains fresh matter for rejoicing; matter more than can be comprehended, more than can ever be exhausted: and therefore the whole of that joy can never enter into the persons partaking in it, but they may very properly be said to enter into the joy of their Lord.

Say then, Lord, and inform thy servant, whether this be the joy, into which thy faithful servants shall enter, whose diligence in improving their Lord's talents shall be accepted in the great day of account. But that, I am told, is a joy never yet seen, or heard, or so much as conceived by any human mind; and consequently have not yet either in words or thoughts come up near to the excellence of that joy prepared for thy chosen. In short, their joy shall be equal to their love, and their love equal to their knowledge of thee: and certainly the perfection of their love and knowledge of thee in the next life, must needs exceed all that ever eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived.

## MEDITATION LX.

*Final Devotion to God.*

Grant me then, even me, my dearest Lord, to know thee, and love thee, and rejoice in thee. And if I cannot do these perfectly in this life, let me at least advance to higher degrees every day, till I can come to do them in perfection. Let the knowledge of thee increase in me here, that it may be full hereafter. Let the love of thee grow every day more and more here, that it may be perfect hereafter; that my joy may be great in itself, and full in thee. I know, O Lord, that thou art a God of truth, O make good thy gracious promises to me, that my joy may be full. And till it be so, let my mind meditate, my tongue speak, my heart desire and love, my soul hunger, my flesh thirst after it, and my whole nature gasp and pant most earnestly, till I actually enter into the joy of my Lord, there to remain for ever and ever.

For wretched is that soul, whose endeavours and desires are fixed on any other object, by a thirst always tormenting, but never refreshed, never satisfied. The end of living is lost to them who love not God; and he who desires life for the sake of any thing besides, is nothing, and aims at vanity and nothing. He who will not live to thee, he that is wise for any other purpose, is no better than a fool. To thee, therefore, gracious Lord, I commit, bequeath, devote myself, from whom alone my whole being, and life, and knowledge is derived: in

thee is all my trust and confidence, from whom I expect my second and better life. I desire, and love, and worship thee, with whom I hope to dwell and reign, and be happy to all eternity. The soul which seeks and loves not thee, dotes on the world, and is a slave to sin; always in bondage, never at ease, never secure. Let my soul, gracious Lord, be ever employed in thy service, my present sojourning tend ever to thee, and my heart be ever inflamed with the desire and love of thee alone.

Let this be my rest, and the contemplation of it my joy and comfort in the days of my pilgrimage. Let me be sheltered under the shadow of thy wings from the storms of anxious and worldly cares; and when the winds blow and the waves swell, let this be my harbour and soft repose. O God, rich in goodness, and the bountiful giver of heavenly delights, sustain my faintings, relieve my hunger, break the bonds of my captivity, heal my wounds, and repair my breaches. Behold I stand at the door and knock; let that tender mercy, which from on high hath visited us, command the door to be opened, that I may go in to thee, and rest in thee, and be refreshed abundantly with thy heavenly sustenance. For thou art the bread and the fountain of life; thou art the brightness of everlasting light; thou art every thing by which those pious spirits are supported and comforted, who love and live to thee. Enter then, into my soul, and adorn and make it, such as thou will not disdain to inhabit. Thou hast my whole heart, I know no rival passion, I burn with no other desire, I delight in the remembrance of no other object.

May a peaceful calm compose all my thoughts, the load of mortality and misery grow lighter, and

all the tumult of worldly cares and troubles be hushed in silence and profound tranquillity. May I feel my heart glow, my mind ravished with ecstacies of pleasure, my memory grow vigorous and strong, my intellectual powers wholly devoted unto thee.

Enable me, blessed Jesus, I beseech thee, to lay aside the weight of fleshly lusts, and exchange my worldly desires and affections for those of thee and heaven. Let my body be in constant subjection to my soul, my senses to reason, and my reason to thy grace; that so both the outward and inward man may be ever obedient, and disposed to do thy will. Fill my heart, my mouth, and all my bones with thy praise. Enlighten my understanding, and exalt my affections, that I may soar upwards to thee; and set me free from those fetters which fasten me down, and are an incumbrance to me, that I may leave all here below, and serve, and fix, and dwell upon thee alone. And unto thy holy name, be ascribed all the glory and praise, for ever, Amen.

THE END.

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